



THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

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The situation is
not a good one in the Middle East if you are a Christian family.

The chances are you
will either be persecuted or you become a refugee and in most cases both.

Historically in
Iraq there were up to 7 million Christians until the invasion of Islam in 633AD
(then known as Mesopotamia) which was designed to wipe out Christianity, its
culture and tradition. It has never recovered since. IS have recently added to
the persecution.

In many towns and
cities across the middle east the mullahs announce from the minarets that all
Christian's are to leave immediately otherwise every one of them will face
consequences or death.

There are 5 million
orphans in Iraq; with Yemen, Kuwait and Qatar etc giving them money to be
terrorists.

In one of the
cities in Lebanon there are many Syrian and Iraq refugee Christians.

The church started
out with 75 then 750 and now averages around 1500 believers and growing, There
are 40 mid-week prayer groups.

What is happening
on the ground? Many Muslims are coming to faith in Christ. Their thought their
religion was infallible but now Sunni and Shia are at war with one another.
Deep divisions exist between the two. The god they believed in no longer seem

to be the god they can trust. Many Muslims in Iraq are coming to Christians to see if they can pray in Christian churches and ask for healing especially for their children. When Arabs come for healing and are anointed by oil, they believe they will be healed by a Christian priest.

Many people including children in Iraq have genetic defects caused by the bombing and nerve gas used in the Gulf war of 1990 and the Iraq War in 2003 which lasted 8 years.

Christians are giving Muslims food and sharing with them. The Muslims ask 'why does our enemy do this sort of thing. Why are they giving clothes and food to us'?

More Muslims have come to faith in the last 5 years than in the last 1500 years. This is a fact. This is the key to the gospel and the key to how the people move on with issues concerning the past in Northern Ireland. The past haunts the country. The longer it goes on people become more entrenched in their stance. How do you make an enemy your friend? This is the conundrum that nobody can figure out.

Politicians don't even understand this basic question. How do you make an enemy your friend? By bombing them?

By reaching out to them; what does Jesus say; 'you have heard that it was **said** love your neighbour and hate your enemy; but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be sons of your father in heaven. Is Jesus, right? Of course, he is. But it's costly. It's sacrificial.

Jesus says; 'a person must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'. Taking up your cross is voluntary.

Local pastors say
that many countries had withdrawn their ambassadors from Syria because of the danger. But they themselves are Christ's ambassadors; they cannot leave. The church from those early days in Straight St must be kept going. Christians fed by the word of God. They must stay and deny themselves as they take up their cross.

But many leave to
because they cannot take any more and end up displaced or in refugee camps, where they are often persecuted even in the camps.

Persecution is a
'Blessing' for many. It drives people to fasting for days and praying and begging the Lord to tear down the citadels and strongholds of Satan.

People coming to
faith are being released from sin and darkness.

Coming to church
hungry to hear the word of God. Not looking at their watches in church services, not wanting to leave the church.

Praying for Revival
with God's spirit blowing into the hearts of Arab Christians, revival blows away the cobwebs of apathy, and affluence and hate. Pray that God would call people to be prayer warriors as not all Christians are gifted in this way. Praying for Satanic strongholds to fall and they are falling.

Christians are
thanking the Lord for persecution.

A Christian Teacher
in Pakistan was appointed principal of a local school. He had the

qualifications and ability way ahead of other applicants. Muslim Parents came and told him to mark their children present in class when they were absent. He refused.

They took him outside and beat him up badly. He had to stay off school. Then they spread rumours that he wasn't fit for the job. Then they accused him with blasphemy. Blasphemy carries death penalty.

An 8-year-old Christian girl was locked in the toilet all day by the teacher when Muslim girls complained that she should not be allowed to use the toilet. Persecution is spreading across all of sub-Sahara Africa. Yet people are being spoken to through dreams and visions just like Acts 2:15-. New life is sprouting up after the forest fire. Revival, persecution, blessing.

The Berlin Wall came down through prayer; the Communist Wall came down through prayer;

The Roman Catholic church will be refined. The Arab Muslim wall is falling apart. Do you think God is behind this? This is unprecedented. We are living in unparalleled times. This has all happened in the last 25 years; that's pretty quick, don't you think? Let's think about what is going on instead of being blinkered and duped by Satan. Persecuted Christians need our help.

Arab Muslims are lost; their faith is a sham, it's totally false. Mohammed was a fraud and a trickster. Oil money cannot buy them eternal life. God is highlighting this to the world. Look at the state of their countries. Even Saudi Arabia the lynch pin of the Arab world is in a mess.

They are building a

wall 600 miles long between themselves and Iraq to the North to keep IS terrorists out. And this is against their fellow Muslims not Christians. Sunni are fighting Shia and vice versa. Look at what happens at Mecca. Many have been killed in stampedes with a crane falling on them 4 years ago at the Hajj pilgrimage. Lightning struck the crane before it fell over at the biggest mosque in the world designed to hold more than 2 million people. Is this all just chance? Saudi Arabia has spent billions on creating a highway for the pilgrims to reach Mecca. The design of this concrete highway was supposed to bring more pilgrims into Mecca instead it has caused chaos.

Rev Farouk believes we are living in the last days but not just yet. He is only one man but there are many Arab believers who have the same opinion.

Much of what he says is based on Isaiah 19 which talks about Egypt, Assyria and of course Israel. There are of course many other prophetic passages in scripture concerning the end times especially in the book of Daniel.

But one thing is certain; the future of the Middle East is going to determine the future of the world. The covenant God made with Abram still stands. Genesis 12 v 3. 'I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' The sequencing of events and time scale we do not know. But read it for yourself. If you read Isaiah you will see a list of the Arab nations where God will bring judgment to each one of them. Arabia, Assyria, Babylon now Iraq, Ethiopia, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel. It's all there in black and white. Israel in particular will endure suffering prior to her deliverance by the Lord.

Egypt like many Muslim nations will disintegrate from the inside the seeds have already been sown. But the Lord will make himself known to Egypt and heal that nation. We live in a time of great economic and political unrest and upheaval.

Europe is in a mess
and the majority of British politicians' post Brexit have decided they want the nations sovereignty to be solely in the hands of Brussels despite a vote by the people wanting the very opposite.

The leaders we
elect really haven't got a clue. One day they decide to bomb Syria, then they say no. Next week they say bomb some parts of it. Change their minds, They don't know who to bomb. Now things have gone quiet and no one knows what's happening. The international community is afraid to act now in Yemen. Meanwhile the innocent are slaughtered.

'Nation will rise against nation'. Matthew
tells us in chapter 24 that the disciples came to Jesus and asked him about the signs of the end of the Age. 'Tell us', they ask the Lord, 'when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age'. They were as interested and concerned as we are today.

Jesus calmly tells
them in a general way; 'you will hear of wars and rumours of wars'. See that you are not alarmed; for this must take place; but the end is not yet.' It's only the start, and it has started. All the beginning of global birth pains.

For Jesus to come
again which he has promised repeatedly to do there will be thousands and millions of believers which he will gather up.

Jesus is not coming
to gather up a few hard-pressed believers and a non-existent church. He will come in glory to gather his people up.

There will be
millions and millions of Christians across the world he will take up to heaven.

Will you be one of the many? Think carefully.

Jesus in the last

14 verses of Revelation 22 tells us 3 times that he is coming soon. Mark in your bibles where he says that. V7.12,20. He doesn't say he will be coming in another 20,000 or 50,000 years. He is coming soon. The hour is near.

People will come to

faith in the middle east. Millions of them. The cradle of Christianity. St Augustine of Hippo home patch. The Christian faith where it all began with Paul's missionary journeys will return.

You see people

think they can play God. They have always thought that. The Eurocrats in Brussels shake their fists at God and all that he stands for.

Their arrogance and

intransigence can be traced even from the Tower of Babel. 'Let us make a name for ourselves', they said as they began building in defiance of God. The Lord in his mercy dispersed the people. Later during the Exodus God called them a 'stiff necked people. Rev Farouk tells an amazing story.

At one of his

prayer groups in the church attended by around 700 people. Yes, a prayer group of 700 people in Iraq. You see what happens with corporate prayer with this number of people. The devil's strongholds fall down.

As he was speaking

a small man came into his church. (Like Zacchaeus) Little tuna he called him.

He had body guards

with him who ushered him to the very front pew of the church.

There he sat with 6 bodyguards around him. After he spoke, he asked people if they would like to be prayed for.

Rev Farouk went to the man and asked him would he liked to be prayed for. He said he would. And within minutes there was a pool of tears on the floor.

After the meeting Rev was told that a man wanted to see him in his office. When he went it was the little man with his body guards. He asked the Rev did he know who he was. Rev said no. He said I am the President's personal advisor. I advise him in all his political affairs.

He went on and told Rev about how as a child of 6 years he was made to watch his parents being hacked to death by Saddam's guards. He was so shocked he could never cry.

Later He was thrown into prison and tortured. Again, he was unable to cry with the pain. But now God was providing a way of healing for him and for his soul. He is now a member of the church.

This is a truly amazing turnaround for any individual. But all things are possible with God. Thank goodness.

Rev Alan Wilson is a recently retired Presbyterian Minister in Northern Ireland. He was a former Police Officer during the 'troubles' before going into the ministry. He is married to Ann and they are now proud grandparents of Jacob and Cora. He enjoys keeping Alpaccas, gardening, watching football and learning how theology relates to the environment and the world at large. He and his wife spent a summer Exchange in 2018 with a Presbyterian Church in Toronto.

The [photo](#) shows, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's "The Martyrdom of St Andrew," painted between 1675 and

