

God's Persecuted People



God's Disguises (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week.

Today I'm going to continue and conclude my talks on God's disguises. In my previous talks I've spoke about three disguises that God has used. The first, the carpenter's son, Jesus of Nazareth. Second, God's messengers. And third, a child.

Today in my last talk in this series I'm going to speak about one more disguise that God has often used and still used today—his persecuted people. God suffers with his persecuted people, he identifies himself with them. And the way we treat them is reckoned as the way we treat God himself.

This is brought out so clearly in the example of Saul of Tarsus. When Saul of Tarsus is introduced in the New Testament he's the number one persecutor of that strange new sect in Jerusalem that came to be known as the Nazarenes, or the people that followed the way, those whom we today would identify as Christians. Not content with persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem Paul decided that he was going to stamp out the sect in every city. So, he obtained authority from the chief priest in Jerusalem to go to the city of Damascus and there arrest and deal with any followers of Jesus he might find. However, as he was on the way from Jerusalem to Damascus, you will recall, he had an unexpected encounter with Jesus himself. This is the description of the encounter and I want you to note particularly the way in which Jesus poke to Saul of Tarsus. Of course, Saul of Tarsus became the great apostle Paul. In Acts 9:1–6:

> "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way [that's Christians], whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from

> heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lord? Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, he replied. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do."

You notice what Jesus asked Saul. He didn't say "Why are you persecuting my people, my followers, my disciples..." He said, "Why are you persecuting me?" And when Saul asked how he was he said, "I'm Jesus, whom you are persecuting." See, God's people don't suffer alone. They may suffer terribly but always God is with them in their sufferings. He's identified with them if they're suffering for his name and for his glory and in obedience to him. And the way we deal with those people is the way we deal with God. That's a disguise that many rulers, leaders of society throughout the ages didn't penetrate. They persecuted the humble, poor people of God and didn't realize that they were actually dealing with God himself in his people. So, we need to understand that Jesus identifies himself with his persecuted people.

It's particularly important to understand this as this age draws to its close because Jesus himself warned his followers that as this age draws to a close there will be worldwide persecution of Christians, followers of Jesus.

This is what he says in Matthew 24:4–9:

> "Jesus answered, 'Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming, I am the Christ [or the Messiah], and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.'"

Things that we are seeing today all around the world. Then he goes on:

> "All these are the beginning of birth pains."

The birth pains of a new age. But then he adds in reference to this period:

> "Then you [that's his disciples] will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death. And you will be hated by all nations because of me."

So, you see, there's going to be a world wide persecution of the followers of Jesus. I advise you and I advise myself, let's be on our guard that we never take the wrong side, that we never in any way allow ourselves to become identified with the persecutors of the people of Jesus. Because, if we do we're going to have to answer to God as if we had treated God himself that way.

On the other hand, those who receive and sow mercy to the people of God will in turn qualify for God's mercy. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 10:41–42:

> "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward."

When we penetrate the disguise and see who it is we're dealing with and accept them for what they are in God, and for how God sees them, then we qualify for the same reward as that person. If the person is a prophet we qualify for a prophet's reward. If the person is a righteous man we qualify for a righteous man's reward.

And then Jesus goes on and says it comes down to very simple basics.

> "If anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

In other words, we're going to be judged by God for the way we deal with God's peoples, especially when they're being persecuted, especially when they're in need, especially when it would be easy to turn our back at them and say, "Well, it's their fault, they shouldn't have been so religious, so they should have been more careful about how they spoke." Many, many things, there's going to be a real pressure to turn against God's persecuted people as this age comes to is close. But remember, when we do that we're turning against God himself. I've said that Jesus identifies himself with his people who are persecuted.

I want to add and to emphasize that this includes those who are his brothers by natural birth. That is, the Jewish people. In Revelation 5 Jesus is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." In other words, he is eternally identified in a special way with Judah and Judah is the name from which we get the word Jew or Jewish. So Jesus, in a certain sense, is eternally identified with the Jewish people. And the way we treat the Jewish people is going to be reckoned to us as the way we treated their great elder brother, their king whom they have

not yet recognized, Jesus himself.

You see, Israel is becoming more and more the focus of world leaders and governments. Every day you read something in the paper about Israel. That tiny little nation of three and a half million people is the focus of world news and world tension. This is not an accident. God has arranged it because he's going to judge the nations by the way they relate to Israel.

I want to read you a rather lengthy passage from Matthew 25 that brings this out so clearly. Matthew 25:31–46. Jesus is speaking.

> "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He shall put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right [the sheep], Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply [and notice this], I tell you the truth, whether you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

You see, he's identified with his brothers. Then he will say to those on his left:

> "Depart from me, you are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger, or needing clothes, or sick, or in prison, and did not help you? He will reply [and notice this reply again], I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me."

So, what we do for his brothers we do for him. And what we do not do for his brothers we do not do for him. And then it says, the summation:

> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

What was the ground for their punishment? They had failed to recognize Jesus in his persecuted people. In persecuting and siding against those people they had taken their stand against Almighty God himself. This is a serious thought whether we apply it to the disciples of Jesus or to the people of Jesus by natural birth, the Jewish people. Just let me quote to you one sentence from the prophet Zechariah, chapter 2, verse 8, spoken concerning the Jewish people.

> "Whoever touches you touches the apple of God's eye."

Remember that, when you speak about the Jews, when you think about them. When you take your stand or attitude concerning them, when you touch them, you're touching the most sensitive part of God, the very apple of his eye. Let's be on our guard.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at the same time with a series of special messages for the Christmas season. At this time of year when our hearts are touched in a special way by God's love, I want to thank all those of you who've been sharing with me their financial burden of this radio ministry. And, I want to ask you frankly to remember the ministry once more with a generous gift before the year closes. This will be a great source of encouragement to me personally and will strengthen me to continue to expand this ministry in the new year that lies ahead. To each one who responds I'll send a copy of my book The Grace of Yielding.

Also, this week's complete series of messages on "God's Disguises" is available in a single, carefully-edited, sixty-minute cassette. Stay tuned for details.



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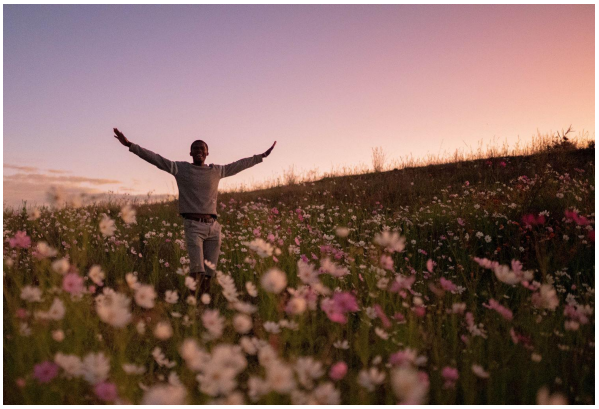

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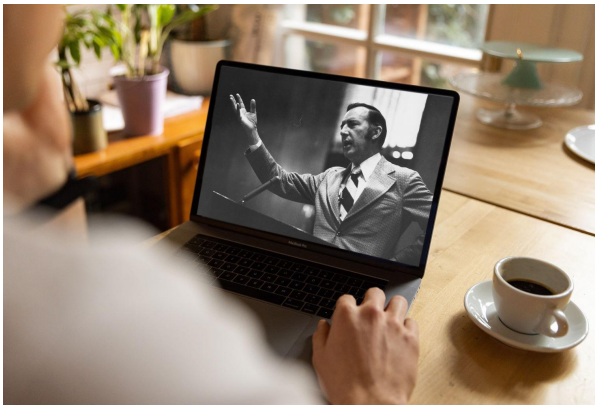

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