

Martyrdom 3: The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church

(9/28/25)

Please turn to *John 12:23-26*

"The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed." –Tertullian, Apology Chapter 50.

Christians are killed for what we say. Whenever we quote the Bible, preach the Gospel, and take a stand for Biblical truth, we're swinging a spiritual sword. One that cuts and divides right from wrong, good from evil, and light from darkness. The spoken word of God upends this world, confronts the false images people have made for themselves, and shows us that we're on a sinking ship.

No one likes that. I heard the Gospel at least 5 times (that I can remember) until I got Saved. All 5 of those times my reaction was verbal hostility and denial because I didn't want to change and already believed myself to be a good person.

Satan controls this world, is the god of this world, and wants to keep his throne. He got so nervous when Jesus showed up, he appeared in person to try and tempt our Lord away from His destiny. He even tried to offer Jesus global rule if our Savior would only...bow down and worship him!

What pride! What hubris! Lucifer knew that Jesus was God in the flesh! It truly takes guts of steel to a) offer God anything and b) tell Him to worship you.

Jesus resisted this temptation and kept His eyes on the mission: ***to go the Cross. To die.***

[Jhn 10:17-18 ESV] 17 "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 **No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.** I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Last week we quoted from 2 different places in the Gospels that the ***religious authorities plotted to kill Jesus*** and indeed, they did. What inspired them? Satan and his angels:

[1Co 2:8 ESV] 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

It's been Satan's idea from the very beginning to kill people who threaten him...to martyr them.

When tempting Jesus didn't work, and Satan saw that He was recruiting more and more people for the end times invasion, **he ordered Jesus' death**. Let me be clear: it was Father and Jesus' plan to die on the cross...but Satan certainly thought it was his.

Jesus chose crucifixion for this reason:

[Jhn 12:23-26 ESV] 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.** 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Verse 23: Jesus is about to be GLORIFIED. What does that mean?

The translation of the word is ***“honored, magnified, celebrated, renowned, extol the worth of.”*** Suppose it's your birthday and your family makes a big deal out of it: bakes your favorite cake, decorates, gives you presents, sings, and treats you really well. It's your day, you're the highlight of it, the center of everyone's positive attention.

Let's up the scale: **it's like a king being crowned**. He's bathed, dressed up in royalty and splendor, shining, and beautiful. As he walks toward the throne the trumpets sound, people kneel and bow, confess him as king, & pledge their loyalty to him. As he sits on the throne, a ruling scepter is given to him, and the crown placed on his head. All attention, honor, pomp, authority, and obedience are given to him...he's glorified.

Thus **Jesus says to His disciples (in John's Gospel) that NOW is His time to be GLORIFIED**. Our next question is, listen carefully, ***WHAT is the manner of His glorification?*** Hold up: was it possible that His disciples thought He would ascend to the throne at that time and be crowned? We know it wasn't that...so WHAT is about to happen that glorifies Him?

He tells us in verse 24-25: **that He's going to be martyred**. He's going to die for the Gospel message He brought and taught. The religious authorities think killing Him is their idea and so does Satan...but Father and Jesus had already agreed this was going to happen.

How is the death of Christ going to glorify Jesus? Again in verse 24 He gives them a gardening lesson: a seed is planted in the ground where it DIES...but then it's raised from the dead. You do know that's what happens, don't you? God set up creation itself to preach His good news and glorify Him all the time!

When a seed is planted in the ground, whether wheat, an acorn or pinecone that fell, something humanity plans on purpose...it dies, then it sprouts and grows into a blueberry bush, an apple tree, orange, coconut, figs, peaches, banana's and of course: Christmas trees. For the fruit bearing trees mentioned, the tree full of fruit is far larger than a single seed, yes? Yet it came from a single seed that DIED.

Remember *the Gypsy moth plague we had here a few years back?* I remember despairing as so many of the white oaks on our property died. Yet a year later I was mowing around those dead trees and what did I see: **thousands of new oak seedlings rising up out of the ground.** Even as they died, those oaks dropped their acorns and in a few decades the forest will be restored and then some.

When a tree or bush reaches maturity, it not only produces fruit that's good to eat, **but lots and lots of SEEDS that will drop to the ground and produces lots more bushes/trees.** The death of the seed begets life, abundant life that vastly greater than the single seed that perished.

Satan doesn't understand this concept, because in his mind, death only begets death. Whereas our Lord and Savior resurrects the death and brings forth more life!

Satan unleashed his minions and Jesus was crucified. One year later, a young Holy Spirit filled man named Stephen was next. He was falsely accused of blasphemy and brought before the High Priest and Sanhedrin. Stephen shares the Gospel with them, and this happens:

[Act 7:54-60 ESV] 54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Led by the spirit of the devil, they drag him out of the city. But look what comes before: 1) they were enraged by his WORDS and 2) they "stopped up their ears" because they couldn't take what he was saying. Once they got him out of the city, they stoned him to death.

What did Jesus already declare? **When a seed dies, it bears GREATER and MORE than itself.** Look at verse 58: who was there observing? A young man named *Saul of Tarsus*. The crowd laying their garments at his feet was an act of acknowledging Saul in some way that isn't 100% clear, but does show the crowd showing a level of respect to him. It's postulated he was the one who had Stephen arrested or perhaps inspired the mob to kill him.

Saul would go to be Paul, one of the greatest of the Apostles!

Stephen was a single seed that died early—young like Charlie Kirk—but the tree that grew up from his death was this:

- Paul planted 12 or more churches.
- 13 of 27 of the books of the NT!
- Some believe Paul literally led thousands to Christ.
- How many more have come to Christ in the last 2000 years, reading Paul's letters?
- How many Christians have been discipled and encouraged by the same?

Satan never learned his lesson and still hasn't. His solution to Christians who talk too much is to kill them. James, brother of John and son of Zebedee, was next. Here's a list of the rest:

- PHILLIP was crucified upside down in Turney in 54 AD for converting a Roman politician's wife.
- MATTHEW was killed by a sword while preaching in 60 AD in Ethiopia.
- JAMES, son of Alphaus, was thrown off the Temple pinnacle in 62 AD for preaching Jesus as the Messiah.
- THADDEUS was killed in Mesopotamia in 62 AD, clubbed to death for converting a pagan king.
- SIMON THE ZEALOT killed in Persia in 65 AD, sawn in half for refusing to worship the sun god of the region.
- PETER was crucified upside in Rome by Nero in 64 AD. He was the one who insisted it be upside down because he didn't feel worthy to have it done right side up.
- MATTHAIS (who replaced Judas) was stoned to death in Ethiopia in 70 AD.
- THOMAS (Didymus) was speared to death by 4 soldiers in India for planting church there in 70 AD.
- BARTHOLOMEW was flayed alive then beheaded in Armenia in 70 AD for his missionary work and refusing to worship the local gods.
- JOHN was boiled in oil and survived, and was then exiled to the prison island of Patmos. Wrote the book of Revelation, then died of natural causes around 95 AD.

Now let's go back to what *Jesus said after His famous "the seed that dies":*

[Jhn 12:23-26 ESV] 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. **25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.**

Verse 25: the martyrdom of Jesus shows us a couple things.

- We can be martyred too...like the Apostles. Like Charlie Kirk.
- All Christians must die to the old self and embrace the new, Christ self.
- Either way we follow Him!
- Father honors (glorifies) all who do.

Let me shift gears for a moment: when they were all still here, ***the disciples asked Jesus what the signs of His second coming would be.*** Let's focus on this one part:

[Mat 24:9-14 ESV] 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 **And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

Notice the order: HATRED of the Church → makes great trouble for the Church → put to death (martyrdom) → false prophets leading many astray → GOSPEL GOES TO ALL NATIONS.

What we see here steps back, BIG steps back, then a massive surge FORWARD.

- Being hated is a step back.
- Having others make trouble for the church is a step back.
- False prophets leading "many" to fall away is a BIG step back.
- Lawlessness and love growing cold: step back.
- Gospel proclaimed to ALL nations is a tidal wave surge FORWARD.

It's a war. Battles rage during a war where, perhaps, the side of Christ seems to be losing some of them. Regardless of the devil continuing to try and KILL the church, the Holy Spirit leads us forward to expand—recruit—despite murder, hatred, trouble, and persecution. Despite falsehoods being preached to lead some astray.

I will now show you a short video that will show you of the great spiritual and physical war that's been taking place for the last 2000 years. Despite all the Christian blood the devil has shed, let's watch and see how this war is REALLY going. Let's find out if the prophecy of Christ we just read is being fulfilled.

SHOW VIDEO

One last thing, even greater than that video. ***The ultimate fulfillment of Christ's prophecy about the end.*** Truly living up to seeds dying and producing far greater fruit.

[Rev 6:9-11 ESV] 9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of **those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.** 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, ***until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.***

Some say these are people martyred by the Antichrist only. Others believe it's all the martyrs for Christ since the beginning. Either way, it's a large number of people. They stand under the massive altar of God in heaven and they ask Him how long until justice is done for them? Look at verse 11: God will not avenge them until the number of people slain for the sake of Jesus is complete. In other words, there are more who will die for Christ...for what they say.

Now we jump to Revelation 7:

[Rev 7:4 ESV] 4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Soon after the martyrs in heaven ask "how long?" **144,000 Israelites are sealed for the work of God and these men will be protected from the Devil and his Antichrist.** The seal of God on their foreheads supernaturally protects them. These men will be Jewish converts to Jesus, and will go forth during the Tribulation to **evangelize.** How successful will they be? Let's check:

[Rev 7:9-17 ESV] 9 After this I looked, and behold, ***a great multitude that no one could number,*** from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,

standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." 13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Verse 9: a crowd is now standing before God in heaven that's so vast, no one can count them. Remember: we're given a number as high as 200 million in Revelation, so this crowd is so much greater than that one no one can even come up with a number.

One of the throned elders asks John: ***"do you who are these guys are?"*** John realizes the elder isn't asking because he doesn't know, but because he does. The elder finally clarifies: ***this crowd is the result of the gospel preaching of the 144,000.***

Let's bring it together: the Antichrist mimics his dad, the Dragon and uses the same method: **let's kill the Christians resulting in the martyrs of the 5th Seal.**

- The blood of the martyrs is truly the seed of the church, producing the 144,000 evangelists who are protected.
- These men preach and produce a harvest of souls the likes of which even Bill Graham would envy.

Despite all the hatred, love growing cold, false prophets deceiving many, delivered up to trouble, and martyrdom: the Church SHINES and GROWS. The number of God's soldiers gets bigger and bigger every day. All who know Jesus will ride behind Him when He returns to crush the unbelieving nations and take over this entire planet!

God's got this. While we grieve over the death of people like Charlie Kirk, let's do so knowing that one seed will produce many many many Christian seeds that will grow into fruit bearing trees. And the Gates of Hell will not prevail against us. LET US BE WHAT GROWS!