

When I wrote a course on the Beatitudes 30 years ago, the one about being persecuted for righteousness sake was instructive. I found two full pages of examples throughout the Bible of people who were being hunted down or pursued. The Greek word for **persecution** is **dioko**, which meant to pursue, aggressively seek after. This word was first used as a **hunting term** which indicated the actions of a hunter who sought to capture or kill an animal. In this message we will only highlight a few examples. We will include the exhaustive list on our website in the Beatitudes section. Jesus' instructions to his first apostles:

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves. But be on your guard against men. They will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

- Matthew 10:16-18 NIV

### Three Sources of Persecution

- Religious leaders - Matthew 10:17
- Government leaders - Matthew 10:18
- Family members - Matthew 10:21

Saul hunted followers of Jesus with murderous threats (Acts 8:3; 9:1) but after his conversion to Christ he was the one who was persecuted in his role as apostle Paul in what was a dangerous mission to preach Christ in a pagan world (2 Cor. 11:23-27).

Jesus experienced **death threats** from various sources.

- King Herod sought to kill the child Jesus - Matthew 2:13
- Pharisees plotted and hunted down Jesus throughout his public ministry - Matthew 12:14; 26:3,59; 27:25-44, Luke 4:28-30. They looked for reasons to accuse Him Luke 6:7. It culminated in the illegal, unjust trial of Jesus in a 'kangaroo court' just before his crucifixion. Throughout history and even today, tyrannical leaders, corrupt judges and courts persecute those who stand for righteousness. Leaders in Russia, Ukraine, Brazil, U.K., Iran, Australia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, China, South Africa, Canada, USA etc. are doing so now.

### Reasons for Persecution

- Fear that the people will have freedom of expression (cancel culture)
- Afraid of the light and exposure of their corrupt actions - John 3:19-21
- Fear of losing power and influence to their perceived enemies
- Jealousy, greed, envy, bitterness, hatred, derangement syndrome
- Driven by the spirit of Antichrist and the Devil (father of lies and slander)
- Destroy political enemies through lawfare and slander etc.

The cartoon characters the **Roadrunner and Wiley Coyote** (You Tube) are a metaphor for the current atmosphere in our country. Wiley kept trying to kill the Roadrunner, but he always failed and kept getting frustrated with each new attempt. The Pharisees set many traps for Jesus to no avail, but finally got him crucified naked on a cross. However, their seeming victory turned into a massive defeat. Their Satanic plan was demolished for good when Jesus rose from the dead! Whenever the Roadrunner escaped Wiley Coyote, he said Beep! Beep!

**Jesus proclaimed something better: 'I am the Living One; I was dead and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of Death and Hades.'** - Revelation 1:18 **He will bring justice to victory and in His name the nations will put their hope.** - Matthew 12:20-21

