

# Sermon

I Am Ū  
*James 1:2-4*

**Jeff Jackson**

**“Living For the One Who Branded Us...Jesus”**

## Martyrdom:

Jesus prophesied to the Church in *Matthew 24:9*: “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.” We are not to be loved and accepted by the world, if we are then we are not loving God in the correct manner. Jesus said “ Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” (*Luke 6:26*)

During the persecutions in the early Church many an apostle became a martyr. James the son of Zebedee was beheaded, this is recorded in *Acts 12:1-3*: “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.” But it was not Peter’s time as angel rescued him while the saints prayed. Both Peter and Paul were both eventually martyred in Rome about 66 A.D., during the persecution under Emperor Nero. Paul was beheaded by the sword. Peter was crucified upside down at his request, since he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

Andrew preached in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and in Greece and was crucified on an “X”-shaped cross. It is known today as St. Andrew’s Cross. Philip had a far reaching ministry in Carthage North Africa and in Asia Minor. He converted the wife of a Roman proconsul who retaliated by having Philip arrested, scourged and thrown into prison. Afterwards he was crucified at Heliopolis, in Phrygia A. D. 54

Simon the Zealot was ministering in Persia, and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria. According to Foxes book of Martyrs Mattias who replaced Judas in the closed group of twelve apostles to Israel was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

James who was the pastor of the Jerusalem church; half brother of Jesus and author of the Epistle died in 62 A.D., by his fellow brethren he tried so desperately to reach. The Sanhedrin Pharisees and Sadducees assembled demanding him to declare from the galleries that Jesus was not the Messiah. He went to the roof and instead of blaspheming the name he shouted out Jesus is the Son of God and judge of the world. Enraged the Jews hurled him off the temple he was then beaten and as he was stoned He prayed as Jesus did, “father forgive them they know not what they do.” He finally had his Life ended with a club.

## Later disciples of the Early Church...

John the Apostle was the last to survive being the only one to have died a natural death from old age. During Domitian's persecution in the middle 90's, he was banished on the Isle of Patmos. Being exiled he wrote the last book of the New Testament--the Revelation. It was John who wrote in *Revelations 12:11*: "And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives unto death." This was and still is the approval of God's grace on every martyr for the Christian faith. Of the many disciples he made, one stands out called Polycarp who lived from 69-155 A.D. The writings tell us he was a disciple of Peter, Paul and John. He became the chief presbyter over the church at Smyrna and taught Irenaeus of Lyons who was one of the greatest theologians we know of in his time. Irenaeus succeeded bishop Pothirus when he died in the persecutions, Irenaeus died in 190 A.D. *Revelations 2:10*.

When Polycarp was brought before the judge, and commanded to reject and blaspheme Christ, he decisively answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me wrong, how then can I blaspheme my king who hath saved me?" It is written of Polycarp "So it befell the blessed Polycarp, who having with those from Philadelphia suffered martyrdom in Smyrna--twelve in all--is especially remembered more than the others by all men, so that he is talked of even by the heathen in every place: for he showed himself not only a notable teacher, but also a distinguished martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, seeing that it was after the pattern of the Gospel of Christ." (Mart Poly 19:1)

"Fixing their minds on the grace of Christ, [the martyrs] despised worldly tortures and purchased eternal life with but a single hour. To them, the fire of their cruel torturers was cold. They kept before their eyes their escape from the eternal and unquenchable fire" (Martyrdom of Polycarp 2:3). Polycarp joined six others who were scourged and beheaded, he was burned at the stake by Antoninus Pius in the market place before a crowd.

Ignatius who was a friend of Polycarp became bishop at Antioch, he was fed to the lions at the Colosseum of Rome under Trajan in 117 AD..

Justin Martyr an apologist for the faith confronted Marcion who rejected the Old Testament and issued his own New Testament in which consisted part of the Gospel of Luke and 10 of Paul's epistles only. He was so bold he wrote a defense of Christianity addressed to the Emperor Augustus Caesar wrote, "You can kill us. But you cannot hurt us." Justin also died a martyr beheaded at Rome in 167 AD...<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.letusreason.org/Doct13.htm>

### ***James 1:2-4***

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

## **I. The Persecution is Real**

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The Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) says 900,000 Christians have been ‘martyred’ in the last decade, equating to 90,000 a year and one every six minutes.

## **II. The Perspective of the Righteous**

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### ***John 16:33***

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

### ***Acts 5:41-42***

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

### ***Roman 8:18-21***

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

**2 Timothy 4:6-8**

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

**III. The Perseverance of the Redeemed**

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**Revelation 12:11-12**

They overcame him  
by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony;  
they did not love their lives so much  
as to shrink from death.  
Therefore rejoice, you heavens  
and you who dwell in them!

**Revelation 21:1-4**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”