



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 169 - Things Are Starting to Heat Up

(2nd Thessalonians)

Religious Persecution

John wrote about Jesus coming into the world: "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him" (John 1:11). That was born out in Jesus' arrest, trials and crucifixion. The Jewish leadership continued its opposition when the apostles went out and preached Jesus to the world.

- Why do you think the Jews were so hostile to Jesus' message?
- Why do you think people feel such passion when it comes to religious differences?
- Why is it important for us to balance our passion when witnessing to someone with a different opinion?
- What persecution have you faced—either overt or subtle?
- What changes in our culture are affecting us as Christians?
- How do you expect persecution to change in the future?

Man of Lawlessness

Persecution can come from a religious or political group or from prominent and powerful individuals. The early Christians saw the Roman Emperor Nero as the first "antichrist" or "man of lawlessness." History records how Nero blamed the Christians for a destructive fire in Rome. This ultimately resulted in the arrest, condemnation and martyrdom of hundreds of Christians in the coliseum. According to tradition, he was also responsible for the deaths of the apostles Peter and Paul.

- What other powerful, persecuting leaders have you heard of?
- What qualities make these leaders so popular with their people?
- How can this mass popularity eventually cause huge problems for the church?
- How might such a man of lawlessness rise to a powerful and influential position in our country?
- What can we do as Christians in these circumstances?

Get Busy

Throughout history false leaders have forecasted the Lord Jesus' second coming. Groups of Christians have sold all their possessions and climbed mountains to be the first to welcome their returning Lord. Then, disillusioned, they've trudged back down the hill, attempted to buy back their possessions, and picked up their daily lives where they left off.

- Why is it important to keep working instead of idly waiting for Jesus' return?
- How does your daily work fit in with God's plans for this world?
- Why is it important to remain watchful for Jesus' return?