

for all these years. When Augustine lived it was more than 100 years since Christianity had been persecuted at all. The last great persecution of Christianity had ended nearly 100 years before Augustine began his life's work.

Was there going to be tribulation for Christians? Was there going to be anything more that would pass under that category? Then early in the time of Augustine's actual ministry, the barbarians broke through from the north across the Danube. Within a few years great numbers of them swept across the Europe. Then from Europe they went down into Spain, and then from Spain the Vandals went across--thousands of them--and seized N. Africa.

And that which for hundreds of yrs. had been one of the great centers of civilization was swept over by these people, destroyed, pillaged and torn to pieces. It never has had a time of real blossoming civilization since that time, anything like what it had previously enjoyed for 400 or 500 years. As Augustine lay on his deathbed in 430 A.D. and as he lay there for his last month with the penitential psalms written in large letters on the ceiling so he could read repeat them over and over as he lay there. He could hear the shouts of those being tortured, those being killed outside the walls of Hippo, one of the 3 cities of N. Africa that was still keeping the Vandals out.

They swept over the country, destroying and pillaging. Eventually after Augustine's death they seized these 3 cities as well. If you had said to Augustine, The Lord will not come for at least another 1600 years. Or 1500 whatever it is up to today. If you had said that to him, I think Augustine would have said, What nonsense! That the Lord is not going to come for another 1500 years! How ridiculous. He said to be watching; He may come at any time. Indeed He does want us to watch. He wants us to know He may come and rescue us from all our troubles and tribulations. But He may not come for another 1500 years for all we know.

So while we rejoice in looking for the coming of our Saviour and pray, Lord Jesus, come quickly; He wants us to realize this v. may be true in our lives--In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

The Gauls had broken through in about 300 B.C. They had broken through from the North, and they had sacked and pillaged Rome. But eventually they had been driven back and the Romans had drawn a line over the whole of S. Europe as far as N. Africa and the near parts of Asia and for about 700 years there had been comparative peace there. Though there had been these periods of great persecution.

Toward the end of that period, economic conditions had deteriorated. People said, Why should we pay these heavy taxes to keep these Roman soldiers up in the north there? Why should we pay these heavy taxes? After all for 700 years we've never had any trouble with them! They had been brought in a few at a time and they had become good citizens here. Why should we not just open up the gates there and let them come in? Why should we carry on this insane business of spending all this money to protect our northern borders?