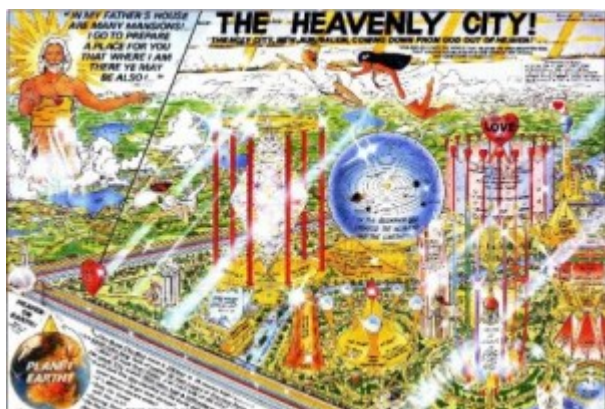


The Benefits of Persecution For Obedience to the Word of God



Seven reasons why persecution is not bad but good for the Body of Christ, the Church.

What Heaven Is Like!



Have you ever wondered what happens to you after you die? What's in store for you when you get to the "other side"? – If indeed there is another side. Is there a Heaven? If so, what is it like? Would you be happy there? Would you find your loved ones there? How different would it be from your life on earth?

If you're interested in knowing the answers to these and many more questions, read on!

You may wonder how I know anything about Heaven anyway. Well, the Bible tells us a lot about what to expect when we get to Heaven – what it will be like, what we will be like, what our bodies will look like, and what we'll do there. There have also been numerous accounts from people who have had a near-death experience where they have died momentarily, gone to Heaven and returned to tell the tale of what they found. Some people have even seen their departed loved ones in visions or dreams, and received messages from them with details of what they found life in Heaven to be like.

One of the most important things about life in Heaven – which many people find surprising – is that it's not entirely different from life on earth! I realize this may not sound like good news, considering all the evils in this world and the sadness that so many people feel and that you may have experienced in your own life. But when I say Heaven is similar to life on earth, I mean that you'll find many things very relatable to your life here. However, the big difference is that Heaven's a perfect world, a world where we can enjoy all the beauties and pleasures that we have here on earth, but without the sorrow, pain, emptiness, loneliness and fear that so often grips us, and without the selfishness, greed and destruction that we see in the world around us.

In Heaven there is only love, beauty, peace, comfort, understanding, joy, willingness to help and to give, thoughtfulness, caring for one another, and most of all, being enveloped in the love of the One who loves us more than anyone – God Himself. The Bible tells us that God is a God of love. In fact, He is the Spirit of Love itself. Therefore His home, Heaven, is a home of love, where you will feel no pain, no sorrow, no rejection, no loneliness – only love! Isn't that wonderful?

Heaven holds many similarities with our physical world. We know from the Bible and from the accounts of those who have seen glimpses of Heaven that we're going to look much the same as we do now. We're not going to be faceless, bodiless spirits, wisping around with no form whatsoever. We'll have bodies, much like we do now, but without the sickness, discomfort or pain we experience here. We'll have our loved ones, our families and children around us. We'll be able to enjoy each other's company, and live happily together forever! If that sounds like paradise, well, that's what Heaven is!

Many people have the mistaken impression that Heaven is going to be a very boring place where we'll have nothing to do but sit around and play harps and sing praises to God. Well, I'm sure that people can play the harp if they want to, and we certainly will be praising God, but our life in Heaven will be much fuller than that!

In fact, we'll probably be even busier there than we are here on earth, except that we won't have the stress, worry, competitiveness and struggle for survival that we presently endure. We'll be busy with things that truly matter, things that make a difference in other people's lives. We'll be investing our time in things that make us happy, inspire us and give us joy; instead of the drudgery, the drab routine, and the senselessness that many of us have experienced in our daily lives here.

We don't know all the details of what we'll be doing in Heaven, but one thing we do know is that we'll be helping people on earth – helping to inspire and encourage them, whispering in their minds and implanting good, happy, uplifting thoughts. We'll help them make the right decisions, so they can be happy too, so they can experience God's love and know that He loves them.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ Himself will soon return to reign over the earth, together with the inhabitants of Heaven, for a period of a thousand years known as the Millennium. One of the tasks of those in Heaven –

those who love God and have gone on to be with Him after this life – will be to help reconstruct, reorganize, and re-educate the people on earth, in order to make this world a better place – a place where love predominates; where everyone has enough, but no one has too much; where everyone can be happy and can enjoy the fruits of their labors; where there is no more war, deceit or cruelty.

[spp title="God's personal reign on earth"]

Perhaps this sounds like a dream of utopia, but this is exactly what God's personal reign on earth will bring about! And those of us who will be in Heaven will have a part in it. In fact, during the Millennium we'll use all that we've learned – the natural gifts God has blessed us with as well as the skills that we've acquired in our earthly lifetime – in order to help restore the earth to a Garden-of-Eden-like state, as God originally intended for it to be before man polluted our once pure and perfect planet through greed and war.

So whether you're a teacher or a doctor or an engineer or a farmer or a social worker, bus driver, clerk, or a mother or father – whatever your profession or talents may be – you'll be able to use many of the same skills and talents you have now, in the life to come. The difference is that you'll be using them for much more meaningful purposes – not simply as a means to support yourself and your family, but to make a difference, to help others and to bring them joy and happiness. The way to be happy is to make other people happy, so as we help and encourage others, we experience the love, joy and happiness that we give to them.

The last two chapters of the Bible's Book of Revelation describe Heaven as a gigantic golden city nearly 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 miles long, and 1,500 miles high! (See Revelation 21:16.) That's enough floor space to cover half of the United States or most of Western Europe, reaching nearly 1,500 miles into space! As you can imagine, if you divide it into multiple floor levels, a space this massive can house billions of people, with room to spare!

The Bible tells us that this wonderful heavenly habitation of God will someday come to earth, and that God will dwell with man. It will be like God moving over right into our neighborhood to live with us! And those who love God and have received His love in their hearts are going to live with Him in His wonderful golden city!

This may seem pretty far-fetched, or like something out of a sci-fi movie, but it's true, foretold in a credible prophetic book – the Bible – which contains hundreds of detailed predictions that have already come to pass throughout history!

The Bible describes the city streets as being made of gold, with a wall encasing the city made of twelve different types of precious gems. We will have houses there, heavenly "mansions" where we can live with our families and loved ones, those who have also believed and received God and His love into their lives.

There'll even be a great amusement park, with heavenly amphitheaters where we can hear heavenly music, a time travel center where we can go and review the

famous events of history and see how they happened and what really took place, and many other centers of interest where we can learn more about the wonderful life that God has given us and how we can best use it to love Him and others.

You'll have a supernatural body that will never get tired, although you can rest if you want to. You'll never get hungry, although you can eat if you want to. And you'll still be able to enjoy the many other senses and pleasures that we relish here on earth, such as touch, smell, sight and even lovemaking – except that each of these things will be enhanced beyond what you have ever experienced before. You'll even be able to fly!

So as you can see, life in Heaven is a lot like that which we have on earth, except of course it's so much better! It's a place that is alive, vibrant, warm, happy, where you'll be able to enjoy all the pleasures that you've ever wanted, and where all the dreams you've dreamed will come true! It's as if you took life here on earth and removed all the bad things and added a lot of love, joy, peace, happiness and fulfillment. – That's Heaven!

Maybe by now you're wondering how you can make sure you will be able to live in such a wonderful place as Heaven, once your time on earth is over. Perhaps you've been told that only those who are very good get to go to Heaven. You may feel that excludes you, since you know you've made mistakes, and have at times done things that were wrong, unloving and hurtful.

[spp title="Good News for You!"]

Well, I have good news for you! Anybody can get a free entrance ticket to Heaven! Anybody can be taken into the arms of love and receive the joy, fulfillment and everlasting love that God wants to give each of us, both here and in the life to come – and that includes you! It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done. It doesn't matter how good or how bad you are – because none of us can be good enough to earn a place in Heaven.

The Bible says that only those who are perfect can earn a place in Heaven. But since none of us are perfect, none of us deserve to go there through our own merit. That's why God sent His Son, Jesus, to this earth 2,000 years ago. Jesus paid our way by dying for our sins, and so, through simply believing in Him as our Savior, we can be sure of a place in Heaven. That relieves us of the burden of having to be good enough to go to Heaven, which we couldn't do anyway, because after all, we're only human. Jesus took our burden for us, and therefore all we have to do is believe and receive the gift of salvation that He wants to give us.

He's opened the door for you to the life beyond, and all you have to do is walk through it by believing. You can't earn it, neither can you be too bad for it, because Jesus loves you just the way you are. He knows you, and He knows what's inside of you and everything you've done, even your deepest secrets. He knows it all, but He loves you anyway, because His love is infinite.

His love is so far beyond anything that we can understand or see with our eyes here on earth. His love can fix any mistake, right any wrong, fill any

emptiness and heal any pain or hurt. His love can bring joy where there was sorrow, laughter where there was pain, and fulfillment where there was uselessness and misery.

He wants to give you all these things now, here on this earth, plus a place in Heaven when your time here is done. He longs for you and your loved ones to be united and happy forever with Him, and that's why He gave His life for you. He's reaching out to you with this gift now. Just take His love! Take it now, take it today!

You can receive His love and a place in Heaven by simply praying this little prayer: "Dear Jesus, I believe that You love me, and that You came for love and died for me so that I can be free, so that I could live in Heaven for eternity. I ask You to give me this gift of Your love now. Fill the emptiness in my life and give me fulfillment and happiness. Help me to give this same love to others, so that they can be happy too. I accept Your gift of my reservation in Heaven."

There! It's just that simple! All you had to do was open your heart, and Jesus is there now, and He'll be with you forever. You can never lose Him! You've got a permanent reservation in Heaven that can never be canceled!

God has now placed this gift of love in your heart, and whenever you need Him, you can call out to Him, and He'll help you with His love.

Although it was a free gift, now that you have His love in your heart, He wants you to do what you can to love others, and to pass on the love He has given you so that others can also experience joy in their lives – both here and in Heaven also!

Will you show love to others? Will you do what you can to make their lives better, even if it's only giving a smile, saying a kind word or lending a helping hand? Simple deeds of love and kindness go a long way and can make such a difference in someone's life. Now that you have a little bit of Heaven in your heart, help put a little bit of Heaven in someone else's heart today.

God loves you, and He's looking forward to living with you in Heaven for eternity! And so am I! I'll see you there!

(Written by Maria David. Maria David is the spiritual head of the Family, a nonprofit volunteer Christian missionary movement with operations around the globe, whose mission is to bring spiritual and physical assistance, hope and God's love to others.)

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