

Hope for North Korea: Christ's Freedom Over Communist Rule

Sooner or later, the “hermit kingdom” must tear down its prison walls to welcome Christianity and join the 21st century.

North Korea, the secretive, oppressive, isolated communist prison under the leadership of the Kim dynasty, is notorious for a horrible record of human rights violations going back to the Armistice signed in 1953 at the concluding of the Korean War. The victims of the regime’s brutal policies run the gamut covering every people group imaginable, but Christians continue to pose the most substantive threat to the regime’s existence and therefore face the worst of severe persecution, often in silence and hidden from the world’s view. They have been forced to meet secretly, routinely are rounded up and sent to labor camps—or just shot on sight because they do not worship Kim Jong-un as their god.

[Download PDF](#)

[responsivevoice_button voice="US English Male" buttontext="Listen to this Feature" buttoncolor:"blue"]

Last of the Cold War Holdouts

One of the last communist nations in the world, North Korea is known for its strict and total control of every aspect of the regime, over information, communication and religious practices. The regime, as controlled by dictator Kim Jong-un, adheres to a state ideology called Juche, which prioritizes the supremacy of the state and its leaders over any other form of allegiance, especially religious faith. Any form of worship

or religious activity outside the state-sanctioned ideology is considered a threat to the regime's control and is harshly punished.

Life in North Korea has been unbearable under Kim Jong-un. About six million citizens are starving and a third of North Korean children suffer from chronic malnutrition. (It is said that North Koreans are, on average, two inches shorter than South Koreans because of starvation.) Most people in North Korea don't have electricity, the internet or access to news from the outside world.

North Korean "democracy" is a farce; people "vote" in "elections" where only one name is on the ballot—and those who cross out Kim's name are herded and jailed. Even certain hairstyles are restricted! Meanwhile, if someone is convicted of a crime, he does not go to jail alone. His children and grandchildren are also imprisoned. The U.S. State Department has learned that as many as 40% of all people in North Korea's gulag system are Christians who are in jail because of their faith.

Yet in the midst of this oppression God has been working. Some defectors have reported that North Korean officials are worried that Christianity will defeat Juche and its state-sponsored worship of the Kim dictator clan. Something began to change when Kim Jong-un became dictator in 2011. His cruel regime and the misery of famine and economic ruin caused people to become disillusioned with the phony utopia Kim claimed to rule over. "In the past, the people were told to worship the Kim family as their god," one defector told *The Telegraph*. "That means they are looking for something else to sustain their faith."

Extreme Persecution of Christians

Christians in North Korea face relentless persecution due to their religious beliefs. The regime views Christianity as a

Western influence that challenges the authority of the state and its supreme leader. The government has implemented a system of surveillance that monitors citizens for any sign of religious activities. Owning a Bible or participating in secret underground churches can lead to dire consequences for individuals and their families.

The fear of discovery and subsequent punishment forces many Christians to worship in secret, making it a constant struggle to maintain their religious identity. Additionally, Christians face discrimination in various aspects of life, including education, employment and social interactions. The regime actively promotes a pervasive atmosphere of fear and mistrust. In many cases, families are torn apart as members are arrested or forced to flee the country in search of religious freedom. Children grow up brainwashed such that expressing religious beliefs becomes not merely forbidden but can also endanger their lives. The psychological toll on families is grotesque as they live in constant fear, knowing that at any moment they could be separated or subjected to violence for their faith.

10 Ways Communist North Korea Is Completely Bizarre

If we step back and study how strange North Korea is—and how backward and barbaric—we would realize what an historic breakthrough it will be when the yoke of communism is destroyed. Consider these facts about this nation of 25 million and its bizarre government:

1. Christians in North Korea have been crushed by steamrollers and roasted over fires. North Korea has the world's worst record of religious persecution. Christian Solidarity International has reported that believers in Jesus are routinely taken to prison camps where they are tortured, subjected to forced labor or herded off bridges. One source has reported that women and children were forced to watch other Christians being shot by machine guns. Possession of a Bible is considered a crime punishable by death.

2. As many as 3 million North Koreans starved in the 1990s. The economy is so poor that as many as two in five, more than 10 million people, are malnourished today, according to the United Nations. One-third of all North Korean children are stunted because of starvation. North Korea's communist government makes it one of the poorest countries on earth, yet it has an army of 1.3 million soldiers, twice the size of South Korea's military.

3. Officially, North Korea is a necrocracy—a government led by a dead man. Even though Kim Il Sung has been dead for 30 years. The communist regime says he assumed "the office of the eternal presidency" on the day of his death, July 8, 1994. His current successor, Kim Jong Un, reportedly had plastic surgery to make him look more like his grandfather.

4. There are 34,000 statues of the late Kim Il Sung in the country. That's one statue for every 750 North Koreans. The dead leader's embalmed body is on display in the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, and it is the most popular tourist site in the country. All citizens of North Korea are required to wear a badge that features Kim Il Sung's face.

5. In North Korea, it is not 2024. It is the year 113. The nation uses what is called the "Juche" calendar, which marks time according to the birth of Kim Il Sung in 1912. Any North Koreans who were born on July 8 or Dec. 17 are not allowed to celebrate their birthdays—because Kim Il Sung and his son, Kim Jong Il, died on those days.

6. The country is called a "democratic republic," but there is nothing democratic about it. Elections are held every five years, but only one name appears on the ballot. If a voter wishes to choose someone else, he or she can cross the name out, but the ballot is not secret. There is no court system in North Korea, and no private property.

7. Kim Jong Un's loyal subjects believe he can control the

weather. The government's propaganda machine has convinced the population that a new star appeared in the sky when the 42-year-old leader was born. An official biography published by the government also says Kim learned to walk and talk before the age of six months and that he can control the weather with his moods.

8. North Korea is often in a state of blackout. The electric grid is so poor that most people have no light, especially at night. Satellite images show the entire country in darkness (and tourists say North Koreans love the dark because it gives them privacy). To make matters worse, only three percent of roads are paved—but the roads are rarely used since there are so few vehicles. A very small, elite number of North Koreans have access to the internet, but all online content is filtered by the government.

9. Children are taught a song in school titled, "We Have Nothing to Envy in the World." Schools are used to brainwash North Koreans from the earliest grades. Yet the kids are expected to bring their own desks and chairs to school, and often students are required to do government work during school hours. Parents sometimes bribe teachers to keep their children from doing hard labor.

10. Citizens of North Korea must produce a certain quantity of human waste. The government requires this because farmers have little or no access to chemical fertilizer. Many citizens have had to place locks on their outdoor toilets to keep neighbors from stealing waste to meet quotas.

Free In Christ Is Free Indeed

Christians are often ridiculed because we believe demons are real and that those devilish powers are working behind the scenes to affect world events. Thankfully, the Bible also says Christ overcame Satan's power through His death and Resurrection—and that God's kingdom will expand wherever the

gospel is preached. Because of Christ's victory, swords will be beaten into plowshares, and freedom will replace tyranny, including for North Korea.

The international community has been slow to address the persecution of Christians in North Korea. The secretive nature of the regime makes it challenging to gather accurate information about the extent of human rights abuses, including religious persecution. However, various human rights organizations and advocacy groups continue to shed light on the issue, calling for increased attention and action from the global community. Severe restrictions on religious freedom coupled with harsh punishment for Christians has produced the deadly environment and abominable human rights record for which North Korea is infamous.

Psalm 46 says: "Come, see the works of the Lord, who makes desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts off the spear; He burns the chariot in the fire," (vv. 8-9, Modern English Version). God can work a miracle. He has heard the prayers of His people on both sides of this conflict and the prayers of the faithful around the world who feel North Korea's pain. He can engineer a lasting peace in this part of the world—and throw open the doors wide for the Gospel to flourish in a thirsty land.

Before long, the churches of South Korea will freely send teams into the North with food, medicine and the message of Christ. Like a patient who has been in a coma, North Korea will awaken. And the world will see a national transformation, hopefully witnessing the greatest display of God's sovereign power over nations since the Berlin Wall fell, and a nation, finally, stepping boldly and thankfully into the brilliant glow of freedom.

Lawrence Tate *is a contributor for Charisma magazine.*