

Easter 2015: The Persecution Intensifies

Millions of Christians around the world will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ this week. This one event sets apart the Christian faith—for the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead is like no event in human history.

Even the people whom Jesus raised from the dead during His earthly life died again. Only Jesus the Christ rose from the dead to never die again.

Jesus' physical resurrection transformed His timid disciples, giving them a courage so strong that they felt privileged to suffer and even die for His sake. That courage in the face of death slowly but surely changed the world—even causing Roman emperors to eventually convert and embrace the Christian faith.

Now it appears that modern-day Christians are being called upon once again to exhibit fearless courage in the face of persecution in the West, and torture and murder in other parts of the world.

Once someone comprehends that there is life beyond the grave, their earthly life ceases to be the be-all, end-all that it was before. Just as early disciples considered it a privilege to suffer and die for Christ, we in the 21st century must imitate their example.

The true Christian faith today is reviled, not only by Islamist fanatics in the Mideast, but even by some people who stick the title *Reverend* before their name. However, false Christians and false preachers are not new to the Christian faith.

Whenever true Christianity appears, a fake one is always at

its heels. But the hope of the resurrection is far more powerful than anything false teachers and preachers can throw at the disciples of Jesus.

Today's true disciples, like their forbearers, know the day is coming—and it may be sooner rather than later—when the resurrected Christ will return. Then, He will return as the judge of every human on the face of the earth. Believers who study their Bible know that today's unbridled hatred of God's Word and His morality is a tell-tale sign that the day of judgment is right around the corner.

From Nigeria's Boko Haram to ISIS to the Muslim Brotherhood to the Ayatollahs in Iran, Christians are being used as scapegoats, just as Nero used them nearly 2,000 years ago. While Nero fed the faithful to hungry lions, or dipped their bodies in tar and lit his garden parties with them, believers of this era are tortured, beheaded or crucified for their faith.

In the West, the media is too timid to kill. Instead they ridicule Christians and make them the butt of every joke—just as the Nazis scapegoated and ridiculed the Jews during the early stages of their rule.

In America and Europe today, people who stand for biblical morality must be prepared to lose their jobs, or live under the threat of economic boycott or other subtle harassment.

But it is only a matter of time before believers in the West are the object of the full hatred and persecution eventually inflicted by the Nazis in Germany.

That should not surprise us—for there are strong parallels between Christians in the West today and the Christians of Nazi Germany. Christians in the West have largely stood by while their brothers and sisters around the world have been killed. Their thinking, like that of Christians in Germany, was that they were safe. Only when the Nazis came after

Catholics and faithful Protestants did they realize it was too late.

We must take our stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters. For although the wave of persecution comes our way, there is hope. The greatest of all hope, actually. If the power of Christ's resurrection tells us anything, it is that if we remain faithful to the end, we too shall be resurrected into eternal life with Jesus.

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