



40 Martyrs of Sebastia

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Believing and having faith in God are very important in life. Faith helps people through hardships and tribulations. In the days after the Lord Jesus Christ died and ascended into Heaven, many Christians' faith helped them withstand terrible persecution. Emperors around the world forced people to bow down and worship their false gods and idols. To confess Christianity would mean having to endure pain and torture. On the thirteenth day of Baramhat, March 8, 264 AD, the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia were martyred for confessing their Christianity.

During that time Emperor Constantine reigned over Rome. He had appointed the ruler for the East, Lecius, and commanded him to treat the Christians well. When the ruler Lecius arrived at his headquarters, he ordered his subordinates to worship the idols of Rome. They refused to bow and worship his idols. That same night some of the soldiers and their children, from the City of Sebastia, made an agreement among themselves to go to the governor, confessing their faith. The Angel of the Lord appeared to them while they were sleeping and strengthened them and comforted their hearts. The next morning they stood before the ruler of the East and confessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The ruler threatened their life, but they were not afraid. He then began to inflict his tortures upon them.

He commanded his men to stone the soldiers, but the stones came back onto those who had wielded them. He ordered them thrown into an icy lake nearby. The lake was excessively cold, so cold that their bodily organs were severed. One of the soldiers spiritually weakened and came out of the icy water and entered the bathhouse by the lake to become warm once again knowing that he would be forced to worship Rome's idols. The heat in the bathhouse indeed melted the ice that was blanketing him, but nonetheless he died as did the others who remained in the icy



lake but because of his weakness he sadly lost his Heavenly reward.

One of the guards witnessed angels descending from Heaven with shiny crowns in their hands. They placed the crowns over the heads of the thirty-nine martyrs. One crown remained in the hand of the angel. The guard witnessing this beautiful sight then began shouting as he went down into the icy lake: "I am a Christian . . . I am a Christian." He received the last crown that was in the hand of the angel and was counted as one of the martyrs to make the total number of martyrs forty.

Three days later, the holy martyrs appeared to the Bishop of Sebastia in a vision and told him, "Go to the lake and take our bodies." The Bishop took the priests, deacons, and the people and went to the lake and discovered the bodies of the forty saints. With great dignity and honor, the Christians carried the bodies and placed them in a beautiful shrine. Their story of great courage and faith was heard all over the country.



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These Forty Martyrs had strength and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They had no doubt that the Lord would be with them, protecting and giving them a better life. That faith is hard to find these days. But if you pray to God and ask Him for that faith, he will give it to you; and he will give you angels to reassure you that you are making the correct move. Have faith like the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia had, and God will strengthen you and be with you all your days.