

## Ripe Peaches

The book of the Revelation to John is a vision of the future. It is filled with dramatic images and symbolism. As a result, it has been interpreted in a variety of different ways over the centuries. However, in the seventh chapter, we are given a clear and beautiful vision of heaven. "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelations 7:14-17) These people are in heaven and are praising God. We also are to sing our praises to Christ, the Lamb, who has taken away our sin. But there is a difference between us and those described by John in Revelations. They are already in heaven. They have survived the problems of earth. Now they are with God, and He protects them from all problems. He has wiped away their tears. They will not thirst or hunger or suffer in any way ever again. But we still live with problems of many different kinds. We still have hurts and pains not only in our bodies but also in our minds and souls. We have worries and fears. We have guilt and sorrow. But we also have a Savior, who has helped others through all the problems of life and taken them to be with Him in heaven. And He has promised to do the same for us.

We can compare ourselves to an peach blossom. In it there is tiny fruit already forming. It grows for a long time before it becomes big and ripe. During that time, a freeze might destroy it. Wind might blow it from the tree. Worms might eat their way into it. If any of those things happen, the blossom will not become a ripe peach. We are already Christians. The Holy Spirit in our Baptism has given us faith in Christ. But we are still growing. Many persecutions try to make us fall from the church. Some laugh at us for loving God and doing good. Sometimes we think that we are good enough by ourselves and that we don't need God. At other times, we think that we are so selfish and greedy and lustful that He couldn't want us. But we will survive. The same power of Christ that made

us blossom into faith will keep us in faith. God does love us. Christ has died for us. This gives us power to overcome the problems of life. The people that John sees in his vision are like the ripe peaches. They survived the persecutions of life. They now praise God forever. And we will too someday. So when troubles come that could make you fall from God, remember the saints in heaven who have survived persecution. God, who helped them, is also helping you.

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