

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Tribulation Saints, Part 2

Scripture: Revelation 7:13-17

Code: 66-30

Let's open our Bibles at this time to Revelation chapter 7. We're looking together at verses 9 through 17, the second half of this rich chapter. We've entitled this section, "The coming world revival," and this is part 2 in a two part look at this text.

As I told you last week, the greatest movement of God's saving power is yet to come. The world hasn't seen it. It will be greater than the day of Pentecost. It will be greater than what was experienced in the early weeks of the church in Jerusalem. It will be greater than the explosion of the apostolic preaching of the cross that sent the gospel through Israel to the north, to the west, and covered a great portion of what we now know as Europe. It will be greater than any revival in human history, greater than what we know of as the great awakening in our own country. This will be a revival that will be unlike any in human history because it will involve people from every nation and every tribe and every people and every tongue coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ. There is coming, as we saw last time, a great revival, a great awakening that has no rival in history, when God will save millions of people in a very brief period of time all over the globe. I suppose we could call it an international awakening, an international harvest of souls exceeding anything that's ever known.

And frankly as we look at Scripture it is clear to us that the redeemed have always been few and the unredeemed, the unregenerate have been many. We have always been identified as the little flock. But the hour is coming when there will be many and they will be a large flock, a great and immense flock.

Let's look at this text and remind ourselves of what it promises. Verse 9, "After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude which no one could count from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes and palm branches were in their hands. And they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.' And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God saying, 'Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.' And one of the elders answered saying to me, 'These are these who are clothed in white robes, who are they? And from where have they come?' And I said to him, 'My lord, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God and they serve Him day and night in His temple. And He

who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them, they shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat for the Lamb is the center of the throne and He shall be their shepherd and shall guide them to springs of the water of life and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Seeing a group of people like this, a group of redeemed people shouldn't surprise us, since our God is a saving God. We remember discussing 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 3 and 4 which say, "God our Savior who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And we remember discussing 2 Peter 3:9, "God who is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." We remember John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son for the purpose of paying the price for sin, so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God is a saving God. God our Savior, the Scripture calls Him, will move in a massive movement of salvation at the most unexpected time. The worst of times in human history. The time we know as the Tribulation, even the Great Tribulation. This time of revival will be at the time of Satan's full fury. It will be at the time of accelerated demonic power when up to now demons who have been bound will be released to accumulate a greater number with those who are already loose and move across the world purveying their evil intent. It will be a time of unrestrained human evil, when the Holy Spirit who was always restrained lets go of that restraint. It will be a time of Antichrist's terrorizing dictatorship and his murderous reign of terror. It will be a time of the unrolling of the seals of God's scroll, unleashing divine wrath on the whole universe. It is a time of unparalleled terror, unparalleled evil, unparalleled judgments that ultimately will destroy sinners forever.

At that time, the time of wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, plagues, the time of a disintegrating and collapsing universe, a fracturing earth killing billions of people, a time which ends in the holocaust known as the day of the Lord, God's full and unmitigated fury, it is that time during the period we know as the seven-year Tribulation that in the midst of it all God will save millions of people...both from Israel and from the nations of the world.

And who will do the evangelizing? Well we already met some of them in chapter 7, namely the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews, twelve thousand out of every tribe, who will be redeemed and sealed with the seal of God to be protected from any harm being done to them and these hundred and forty-four thousand will preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and I believe be greatly instrumental in the conversion of Israel, as well as the salvation of this massive multitude in the following section of the chapter.

Then there are two witnesses described in chapter 11, we'll see them later. Two witnesses who have supernatural power, who can cause the rain not to fall, who can do supernatural deeds, who will even die in front of the whole gazing world and then rise again from the dead. They will be powerful preachers. And then there is a heavenly angel described in chapter 8 verse 13, chapter 14 verse 6,

flying through the heavens preaching the everlasting gospel. And then, of course, there are believers, those who come to faith through the instrumentality of these other agencies and through personal witness of those who have come to know Christ will be spreading the gospel, according to Matthew 24:14, the gospel will be preached and it will be preached extensively and then the end will come.

So really there's going to be a great force of individuals that will be proclaiming the gospel. And people will repent. And people will believe. The terrorizing judgments that are described in the first six seals, which we've already discussed, are going to cause people to take a good hard look at reality. And many of them will repent. Here we meet this massive group that have repented and gone on to heaven in this time called the Tribulation.

Now just to connect you up with the group in chapter 6, I remind you that in chapter 6 verses 9 to 11 we have a description of what amounts to the same believers in a different circumstance. This we find under the description of the fifth seal, underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God, because of the testimony which they had maintained. Here is a group of people who have come to faith in Christ some time early in the Tribulation period, they have already been martyred, and you know well because we've discussed it, there will be a great amount of animosity raging against those who know Christ. They will be the casualties of that animosity. They will be slain because of their faithfulness to the Word of God and the testimony concerning Jesus Christ which they will uncompromisingly maintain. And as you see them in chapter 6 verse 10, they're crying out to the Lord and asking for vengeance. They're asking God to bring vengeance on these evil people who hate God, hate Christ and hate His children. Each of them is given a white robe and they're told they should rest for a little while longer until the full number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been should be completed also.

So here you have the first vision of martyrs who have come to faith in the Tribulation, who have been slain for their faith in the fifth seal, chapter 6, they're pleading for vengeance. Here, all of a sudden, in chapter 7 they're joined together with the rest of the redeemed multitude who have died as martyrs, who have died perhaps in the holocaust of judgment, some who have died natural deaths, but all of those who have come out of this period of time are collected together, they're no longer under the altar pleading for vengeance because vengeance has already come in full blazing form in the sixth seal and is about to be unleashed in even greater measure in the seventh seal.

So here we see basically that same group only not in a position of petition, in a position rather of celebration. We noted in verse 9 that they had white robes and suggested to you that that refers to righteousness, purity on the one hand. On the other hand, to victory and celebration and exaltation, both of those are conveyed here. Perhaps the idea of exaltation, celebration and victory and triumph is even the more...the more primary thought when you see the addition of palm branches in their hands because those were used in ancient festivals to express joyous celebrations, such as the

Feast of Tabernacles, which we described to you last time.

So we saw, first of all, the description of the group. Secondly, we saw their location. In verse 9 it says, "They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb." We know that the throne is in heaven, the Lord God sits on it, the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, He too is in heaven, so they are in heaven. They then have died. They have been martyred. They have been killed in the disasters or they have died natural deaths. And they are yet in heaven. The fact that they have white robes and palm branches might indicate that they have received bodies at this time, I don't think that's necessary to conclude since chapter 20 verse 4 says, "They will not receive their bodies until later on just before the Lord establishes His thousand-year Kingdom," Revelation 20 verses 4 and 5, and we pointed that out last time.

So what you have here is not necessarily indicating that they have received their glorified bodies, the white robes, the palm branches are emblematic of their triumph and victory and their purity. And in John's vision he has to see something because you can't see a soul and so he is visually able to see the vision of robes, palm branches which helps him to identify who these folks are.

By the way, back in verse 9 of chapter 6 it indicates that underneath the altar were the souls of those who had been slain. There you have a direct indication that it was their souls, yet wait for the bodies. The idea of palm branches and white robes being symbolic.

From the location we then move to the action and we said in verse 10, the action is simple, they're involved in worship. They're crying out with a loud voice, and they're worshipping the Lord saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb." They're engaged in praise that is very similar to praise back in chapter 5 rendered by the twenty-four elders. In verse 8 it tells us that the twenty-four elders, you remember they represent the church that has been raptured and taken into heaven, they have harps which are associated in the Old Testament with prophetic ministry. They have golden bowls full of incense which are associated with prayer. So here are those who are those who have heard the Word of God and those who have prayed and they are singing a new song and it is a song of redemption, how that Christ was slain and purchased for God with His blood, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And so here the twenty-four elders are singing a song of salvation, and later on in chapter 7 this innumerable multitude from across the globe are also singing a song of salvation. So they have something in common with the twenty-four elders and that is they have been saved, they have been redeemed, something that angels do not experience, something that is uniquely the experience of men.

And then we moved to the fourth point at which juncture we stopped and we'll pick it up, and that is the association. We saw the description, the location, the action...the association is quite interesting. In verse 11, "And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God saying, `Amen,

blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever amen." They join in on the praise.

It is a wonderful association because here are these people who have been redeemed and their souls are now in the presence of the Lord in heaven, near the throne, waiting the moment of resurrection of their bodies and the return to the glory of the Millennial Kingdom. And they're in firsthand association with the glorious angels of heaven. It's a marvelous association.

Let's look at it a little more closely, there's a couple of points I want to make reference to. First of all, it says, "And all the angels were standing around the throne." That's a large group. If you go back to chapter 5 verse 11, John says in that vision there that he heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of those angels was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. And if you sort of multiply all of that out you get into the billions. And it wouldn't surprise me at all to know that there were billions of angels, an innumerable hosts of angels. In Hebrews 12, isn't it verse 22, "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God and the heavenly Jerusalem and to the myriads of angels." The innumerable angels, some translations say. These are creatures created by God and they were created by God for the express purpose of serving and adoring and praising Him. In Colossians 1:16 it says, "By Him...that is by the Lord Jesus Christ...all things were created in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by Him and for Him." And those are descriptive terms of angels. They are the invisible thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities created by God for His service and for His praise.

And so, they chime in. And here are these...these unworthy sinners, these...these wretched people who have literally turned their backs on God, they have missed the Rapture, they have rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were not taken in the church when the church was raptured and glorified before the Tribulation began, they are the rejecters. And in many cases, probably living in parts of the world where they never even heard the gospel. And here it is that in God's marvelous mercy, even after the church has been taken out and all hell breaks loose on the earth, He reaches out and in wrath remembers mercy, gathers them to Himself and they're not second-class citizens, either, He takes them right to the throne and they mingle with the angels, the holy pure angels. These worshiping celebrating saints even stimulate, I believe, the praise of heaven because the angels can't personally experience salvation, they wouldn't be stimulated to praise God for it unless some other redeemed creatures showed them that joy. And so here are these redeemed people who stimulate the angels into praise.

The angels, obviously, have always been fascinated by this. First Peter 1:12 says that angels have always wanted to look into these things regarding salvation and Ephesians 3:8 to 11 says the Lord redeems the church to put His glory on display before the angels. I believe God takes great pleasure in displaying His attributes, and particularly His redeeming power before His holy angels.

And there they are, back in verse 11, and they're standing around the throne, kukloin the Greek, they're in a circle. They've got it ringed. This is the throne described in chapter 4, this magnificent throne where God sits. He's like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance and there's a rainbow around the throne like an emerald, and around the throne twenty-four thrones and on the thrones the twenty-four elders sitting clothed in white garments and golden crowns and from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder, of course, anticipating judgment. And there is the Holy Spirit around the throne and in front of the throne is a sea of glass like crystal. And in the center and around the throne, four living beings, and he goes on to describe them. This is a magnificent scene.

And then in chapter 5 the One sitting on the throne takes a book and then comes the Lamb, standing in verse 6, right in the midst of the throne. It is a glorious place. God is there, Christ is there, the Holy Spirit is there, these special unique living beings which are unique cherubim are there. The twenty-four elders representing the church are there. And all of the millions and billions, however many there are, of angels are all there and gathered with them are these redeemed out of the Tribulation.

Note again that it tells us further in verse 11, not only were the living beings there but the elders were there. They were there as well. The elders and the four living beings, the elders, as I remind you, represent the raptured church, we've interpreted that several times, I won't belabor the point, but each time they appear in the prior visions, it seems clear that they are singing the song of redemption. They've experienced that redemption and they represent the raptured church.

So here is an association of praising beings, both men and angels. One little note that I think might be an interesting note, it says, "And all the angels were standing around the throne and the elders." Which seems upon a simple reading to indicate to us that the elders were not angels. What makes that maybe a little bit tenuous is He then adds "And the four living beings," who are angels. But it is interesting to me, at least, that he talks about all the angels and the elders, as if perhaps they have a unique category of their own and certainly the four living creatures among all the angels are somehow also very unique.

And what do they do? Verse 11 says, "They fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God." They prostrate themselves to worship God. That's not really anything new. That's the posture they continually take. They are committed to that. In fact, if you go back earlier into the visions, and I won't belabor the point, chapter 5 you see that same kind of prostration. You see it in chapter 4 verse 10, you see it later on in chapter 11 verse 16. They're eternal activity is to fall down before God and worship. They recognize His sovereignty, they recognize His supremacy, they recognize His majesty, and they utter a glorious benediction. And it really doesn't need to be explicated, it only needs to be read. They say, "Amen," at the beginning and they say, "Amen," at the end. Somebody might

suggest that they were Southern Baptist angels because that's what happens so often in a Southern Baptist environment. But the word "amen" means "let it be, let it be." It is an affirmation, so let it be that blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be given to our God forever and ever, let it be...let it be. Very much like that glorious benediction back in chapter 4 verse 11, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power for Thou didst create all things and because of Thy will they existed and were created." And the same in chapter 5 verse 12, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing," and then in verse 13, "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever, and the four living beings kept saying Amen, and the elders fell down and worshiped."

The scene is worship because that's the occupation of heavenly beings. They worshiped, follow this, in chapter 4 and they worshiped in chapter 5, before the seals were opened, before the judgment began. And now they're worshipping again as it comes to an end. This must be a greater and a more exhilarating praise because of what they've already seen. Seal one, seal two, seal three, four, five, six broken as the Lamb breaks the seals and the judgments fall. And now this mounting crescendo of praise comes in response to what they once anticipated and now have seen. And they stand on the brink of the seventh seal and the final explosion of judgment that comes in the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments that are to follow.

And it's fitting, isn't it? Do you remember when we studied earlier chapter 4 and 5 how the praise started with a small group, first there were four, and then there were twenty-eight, and then there was a massive innumerable host of angels, and now we've added another group, haven't we? It was the four living creatures and the church and the angels and now we add the redeemed out of the Tribulation. And so the multitude of praising beings in heaven is larger than its ever been. What an association for those persecuted, murdered, humble, faithful believers to take their place in this kind of glorious group. But that's God's plan for all of His redeemed, His wonderful plan.

And, of course, that's what Luke 15 says. We read that in the message this morning in verse 7 and in verse 10. It says that the angels rejoice when someone is saved, and we see that played out in the parable of the prodigal where there's this tremendous party which symbolizes the rejoicing of heaven over the repentance of sinners. And so here you see the greatest praise that heaven has ever known taking place, ever known since the creation.

Now the question is specifically, who are these newcomers who are now around the throne added to the rest of the host? That brings us to point five, let's call it origination...origination. Where did they come from? And we already know the answer, but let's look at it in some detail. Verse 13, "And one of the elders answered saying to me, 'These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they? And from where have they come?'" One of the elders representing the church asks John who they are and where they came from. He's not asking, now follow this, he's not asking for his own information,

he knows them. He knows who this group is. He's a heavenly being now, he's a glorified believer. He has experienced full resurrection and translation and is like Jesus Christ. He knows even as he is known, this representative of the church. And he's not asking for his own information, but he's asking to make sure John knows.

That's an amazing thought, really. And brings up a point that our own Dr. Robert Thomas, teaching in our seminary, includes in his commentary on Revelation, he says this, "This tool shows that visions were not given for the purpose of spectacular displays, but to convey revelation the details of which were not to be missed." So the elder wants to be sure that John is getting the picture here and understanding it. So he says to him, "John, who are these and where have they come from?" lest John and everyone else somehow miss the point.

You say, "Is it important?" Yeah, it's important. Because we might assume that there isn't going to be any salvation in the Tribulation, we might assume that. We've read about all these horrible judgments. And if you look over in chapter 9, look at verse 20 for a moment. By the time the trumpet judgments have been unleashed on the world, it says in verse 20, "The rest of mankind who weren't killed by these plagues did not repent." Verse 21, "They did not repent." So there's coming a time when people aren't going to repent. Chapter 16 verse 9 talks about the final bowl judgments, the ones that come in rapid fire at the very end, and it says, "Men were scorched with fierce heat, they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues and they did not repent." And we might read that and assume that all this fury of judgment produces no repentance. I think what Revelation 9:20 and 21 and Revelation 16:9 are telling us is that those people who have rejected all the way to the very end are going to be so hard they won't repent. But during the time of the seven seals, the first six seals being opened, they're going to be people who repent. This is important. It's important to John. I mean, after all, John...John could easily have a defeatist mentality, is that not true? Where is he when he hears this? He's on a rock in the Mediterranean. He's in exile.

Furthermore, he has been given seven letters to send to seven churches and five of those seven spell doom for those churches. From John's perspective, this does not look like a world conquering movement. And to read what he is reading as he writes these revelations, he would conclude that Christianity in the end will fail and God is just going to damn the whole world. Not so, John is not to see it that way and we aren't either. We are to understand that even though there is an ultimate sense in which evil runs its course and the ultimate and final destruction of the power of God will fall, there will be even in that hour the greatest revival the world has ever known and the gospel will triumph in the hearts of millions. So John is getting, and so are we, some very good news. And the Lord wants to make sure that he understands so one of the elders poses the question.

John's response to the query in verse 14, "I said to him," this is a pretty good answer, "My lord, you know." I mean, he recognizes that he knows and I guess he's wondering why are you asking me, you know. I think he speaks with great respect when he says, "my lord." And he admits that he needs the revelation. He is confessing I don't know, you do. It's another way of saying, "Please tell me."

"And he said to me, `These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation and they've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" That's their point of origination. Out of, ek, out of the Tribulation, the Great one. They've come out of it. They lived into it, they were redeemed during it, and they've now come out of it. The only way out is death by martyrdom in the holocausts by natural course. In fact, back in Matthew 24, "Unless those days were cut short, nobody would have survived," said Jesus. Lots of death, billions will die, including believers. They've come out of it, out of the Tribulation, the great one.

They've heard. They've believed. And they've been dying since the first half, but the great massacre occurred in the Great Tribulation and this group has continued to come out.

As I said earlier, these people didn't go with the raptured church since they weren't saved. They were Christ-rejecters, they were those, perhaps, who never heard the gospel. And during the seven-year period, especially in the last half, judgment increases, Antichrist terrorized, they are saved and they escape. They are the opposite of the ones described in 2 Thessalonians. A quick reference there will help you tie that Scripture in. Second Thessalonians says that...that people are going to perish because they didn't receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And that's during the time of Antichrist when Satan comes with power and signs and false wonders and sends his emissary, the man of sin, the man of lawlessness. So there are going to be many who will not receive the love of the truth, but these are the ones who did. These are the ones who received the love of the truth who believed and who received.

You say, "Does this mean that you have a second chance?" No, it just means you have your lifetime and if you happen to have some of your lifetime left during the Tribulation, you still have your lifetime. If the church is raptured out and you're still alive, you still have the time, whatever time you have.

Some people have tried to say, "Well, you see, these...these will be people who...who...who never lived during the time of the church." That can't be or they'd all have to be under seven, for obvious reasons. Some have said, "Well these are people who never heard the gospel and only the ones who never heard the gospel ever in their whole life will have this chance." You can't find that anywhere in Scripture, although I read that in several commentaries. No, you have your lifetime. And should you live pass the rapture...you say, "Well I'm glad to hear that because I'm going to just live the way I'm living, as soon as the Rapture occurs, I'll fall on my knees, confess Christ the first time I hear a Jewish evangelist from any tribe." Don't presume on God. But you have your lifetime.

So here are the saints who have come out of the Tribulation, the great one. Would you please notice that the verb here looks like "who come out," is some kind of an instantaneous act, erchomai, literally means, "who are coming out." It could be translated, "the ones coming out." It is present, continuous, durative participle. It shows a prolonged process, the ones who are coming out. This group keeps accumulating as people keep dying. It therefore doesn't lend itself to describing a

Rapture. A Rapture is in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in a split second, in an instant everybody goes. This is not that, this is a continual process, prolonged, going on of people coming out and coming out and coming out and coming out over the years of the persecution and the death that is occurring. Anyone who loves souls is going to have to rejoice in this because Antichrist is doing his big thing, trying to destroy the work of Christ, Satan is pouring out all his fury trying to stop anything that the Lord would want to do for His glory, trying to withstand the forces of God in terms of redeeming power, and of course, that means the Holy Spirit. And yet in the middle of all of it and even in the middle of wrath, God is redeeming souls and they keep coming out, they keep coming out, they keep coming out.

This is written, I believe, first of all to encourage us of the ultimate gospel triumph, when the few will become many and to encourage preachers and witnesses to be faithful in that time and those who live in that time will bear fruit.

Another note about that phrase there in verse 14, "the ones who are coming out," clearly separates these believers from any other group of saved people throughout history. They aren't blended in. They aren't just blended in to the church. If this were to refer to the Rapture, why not identify all of those people as the redeemed church? Why isolate this group? Why not just call it the triumphant church...the glorious church who lived and died before and during? Why not say it is the redeemed and raptured church?

No, these are a uniquely separate group of believers who are coming out of this time of Tribulation. Not at one moment, but in a process, as their lives are taken.

Some believers, now note this, will survive. They have to because you have to populate the thousand-year Kingdom with human beings, earthly beings who can marry and have babies and repopulate the millennial world. In fact, you know as well as I do from your study of Matthew 24 that at the time when the Lord returns, two will be in a bed, one will be taken, the other will be left. What does that mean? One will be taken in judgment, the other will be left to go into the Kingdom. Two will be in a field, one will be taken in judgment, the other will be left to go into the Kingdom. There will be believers who survive. They'll make it through.

Revelation chapter 12 tells us that many of them will be Jewish. The Lord is going to take a place, find a place to hide them and He's going to hide them there for the 1260 days of the years of the Great Tribulation so that they'll be alive to go into His Kingdom. An innumerable host, now follow this, an innumerable, uncountable host of people will die and go to glory. Another large group of people will be redeemed and not die, they will survive having been saved and spared and protected, including the hundred and forty-four thousand and many other Jews, according to Revelation 12, as I noted, that will be hidden away, and many Gentiles who also will be spared and God will protect and they will go into the Kingdom. They will repopulate the world so that there will be nations all over the

globe of many kinds of peoples who will all come to Jerusalem and there, you remember, ten Gentiles will hang on the robe of a Jew and say, in effect, "Take me to see your King." But these have died and they're not all the redeemed, they're only a part of them. More will live right on in to the Millennial Kingdom.

In describing them further in terms of their origination, he says in verse 13, "These who are clothed in the white robes...verse 13, and then he further, that further describes that white robe concept, verse 14...they have washed their robes." And so we would conclude that while the primary emphasis earlier on the white robes is celebration, exaltation, victory, triumph, joy, there is also the idea of righteousness and purity and here that is the emphasis, these are white robes because they have been washed and they have been made dazzling, leukon, and they have been washed and made dazzling by what detergent? The blood of the Lamb.

Now any of you ladies will know very well that blood doesn't get anything clean, it stains and has to be cleaned. But here is a paradox, a precious paradoxical truth. Blood doesn't stain, blood cleanses every stain. The divine detergent removes sin all together. This wonderful theme of the blood of the Lamb is not new to the book of Revelation. Back in chapter 1 verse 5 it says, "To Him who loves us and released us from our sins, by His blood." Chapter 5 verse 9, "Thou didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," that's 5:9. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. The Bible says we have received forgiveness through His blood. We couldn't be redeemed by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the blood of Jesus Christ we have been redeemed. Peter calls it precious blood, the blood of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

And so, here are redeemed people who sins have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb and they've died and they keep coming out of the time of the Tribulation to take their place around the throne forever to praise the Lord. That leads us to the sixth point, let's call it function. Description, location, action, association, origination, and function.

What are they doing? Verse 15, this tells you, "For this reason they are before the throne of God...here's the reason they're there...they're there for this reason, and they serve Him day and night in His temple." That's why they're there. They're there to serve Him. The word "serve" is a priestly word. It's not a menial word, it's not a common slavish word, it's a priestly word. They are rendering spiritual worship. And part of that spiritual worship may involve service, but the idea is they are there, they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb for the very reason that they may come before the throne of God to worship Him day and night in His naos, in His holy place, in His temple.

In the final glorious, follow this thought, Kingdom of Christ in the Millennium, there will be a temple, Ezekiel 40 to 48 describes it, there will be what we call the millennial temple. So there's a temple here in heaven. There will be a temple on earth, it will be God's temple come down from heaven, as it were, on earth during the Millennium. But turn to Revelation 21 and see a very interesting note.

Revelation 21:22, now we're looking at the new heaven and the new earth, this is passed what John sees in his vision, this is passed the Millennium that Ezekiel describes in 40 to 48. Now we're looking at the new heaven and the new earth, the final eternal state. And Revelation 21:22 says, "And I saw...what?...no temple in it for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." They are the temple.

There isn't any temple in the eternal state. God is everywhere. And what 1 Corinthians 15 says comes to pass. "God becomes all in all." In John's vision is the temple because that's what the text says. A special holy place where God abides in, listen, an otherwise fallen universe, right? During the Millennium there is a temple, a special holy place where God dwells in an otherwise still fallen universe, partially restored and not fully. In the eternal state, God doesn't need a temple because there's no evil in the universe and He is the temple.

And what's our function? From the time we get there throughout all eternity, latreuo, that's the word for priestly worship.

A seventh word in understanding this text is the word "protection." This has got to be good news and we'll hurry to a conclusion. This is such good news. Look at verse 15, it says, "And He who sits on the throne...that is God...shall spread His tent over them." What is that talking about? Protection, security. God will put His tent around them, the Shekinah presence will become their protection, a canopy of shelter to protect them from the terrible things they have suffered in the world. Remember, many of these are martyrs, all of them have seen horrors indescribable horrors. They've seen millions, billions of people, some of them die. They've seen the disasters of the four horsemen of the apocalypse and the following sixth seal when the universe collapsed. They've seen all of this. And they've suffered much. But when they come in to the presence of the Lord, they come to a secure place, a canopy of shelter to protect them from all the terrors of the fallen world.

Several times in Revelation, chapter 13, chapter 21, it talks about God becoming our tabernacle, our tent in whom we dwell and in whom we find our safety. What a wonderful promise. Never again will anyone harm them, never again will they suffer pain.

And finally, an eighth word in unfolding this text is the word provision. Verse 16, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat." You know, they experienced that during the time of the Tribulation. They experienced hunger. Do you remember chapter 13, it tells that if anybody wanted to buy or sell they had to do what? Take the mark of the beast, right? Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ refuse the mark, so what happens? They hunger, they thirst because they refuse to worship the beast, the Antichrist. Furthermore, they probably experienced some of the terrifying reality of the scorching sun that we read about earlier in God's judgment. They know what it is to hunger, they know what it is to thirst, they know what it is to have the sun pounding down on them. Chapter 16 verse 9 says, "Men were

scorched with fierce heat." In the end, now maybe not all of these people lived into that, but you can understand in the sixth seal back as we noted it in chapter 6, as the sky begins to disintegrate, the universe begins to collapse, normal temperatures are skewed and we discussed all of that. They'll see the destruction of water. You remember the things coming out of the sky that pollute the waters. You remember the destruction of animals and plants, the limitation on food and drink. All of this they will have experienced but never again. They shall hunger no more, thirst no more, neither shall the sun beat on them, nor any heat for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd and shall guide them to springs of the water of life and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.

It almost gives you the idea that they came to heaven weeping, doesn't it? The Lamb is the center as He was in chapter 5 verse 6, in the midst of the throne. He becomes their shepherd. That metaphor is everywhere from Psalm 23 all the way to Hebrews 13:20 and a lot of stops in between, the Lord is my...what?...Shepherd, I shall not want." Here is a Lamb who becomes a Shepherd. He gives them all they need. He provides all they could ever desire or want as well as complete security. He guides them to the springs of the water of life. And who is the water of life and where are its springs? God is the water of life and His springs are, of course, in His presence in glory. Protection, feeding, leading, all thirst is quenched and ever another tear to be shed. And believe me, as you go through the book of Revelation there are many tears, many tears. But they stop being shed when the saints reach the presence of God.

In Revelation 21:4 again it says in the new heaven and the new earth, the Lord will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will be no longer any death, mourning, crying, pain, those kinds of things have passed away.

Well I don't know about you but in the midst of the world in which we live today we could certainly get the idea that Christianity is on the way to being defeated, couldn't we? Somebody asked me the other day, "If you look over the whole world, where do you see the church advancing?" Do you see it advancing in Latin America? No. Do you see it advancing in North America? No. Do you see it advancing in Asia? No. Do you see it advancing in western Europe? No. Do you see it advancing in eastern Europe? Maybe, appears to be. Do you see it advancing in Africa? Some places. But as you look over the world what you see as the church, organized Christianity, seems to be fast moving toward a very obviously defective kind of Christianity, doesn't it? And we seem to be losing. It's good news to me, I trust to you, that in the end the gospel triumphs, amen?

Thank You, Father, for our time tonight in Your Word and so many things that could be said and we just trust that what was said would represent Your heart and Your intention as You inspired this through Your Holy Spirit. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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