

United in Praise
Revelation 7:9-17
SS Lesson for 11/07/2021

Devotional Scripture: Rev 5:6-14

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Some Christians believe the book of Revelation speaks only of the future. Others believe the book speaks in coded language about the people and events of the first century AD. Still others believe the book is figurative or symbolic, using vivid imagery to teach spiritual lessons. Then there's the issue of separate approaches to sections consisting of chapters 1–3; 4–19, and 20–22! No matter the interpretive perspective, three things should be observed by careful readers. First, Revelation combines elements of ancient letters, prophetic texts, and apocalyptic literature. It is considered partially a letter because of how the book opens with a greeting (Revelation 1:4–7) and is addressed to specific churches (see chapters 2 and 3). Revelation is considered a form of prophecy (1:3), given to John in order that he might declare the “testimony of Jesus Christ” (1:9). Revelation is also considered an apocalyptic text. During the era in which John recorded his revelation, apocalyptic texts were commonplace. This was a highly stylized type of literature written to unveil God’s plan for the world, both in the past and for the future. Apocalyptic literature often presents this plan through vivid and cryptic imagery. A proper understanding of Revelation requires recognizing the imagery and language of apocalyptic literature (compare Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 13:24–27; Luke 21:25–28). Second, the book of Revelation is loaded with allusions to the Old Testament and assumes the audience’s familiarity with their source (compare Isaiah 6:1–3; Ezekiel 1:18, 22, 26–28; and Revelation 4). Revelation rests on the shoulders of Genesis (Genesis 1:1; see Revelation 21:1), Exodus (Exodus 19:6; see Revelation 1:5–6), Daniel (Daniel 7:13; see Revelation 1:7, 13; 14:14), and even Psalms (Psalm 2:9; see Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). The fullest understanding of Revelation recognizes its roots in the Old Testament. Third, Revelation emphasizes worshipping God. The text is filled with poetic scenes of worship (see Revelation 4:8; 5:9–13; 7:10–17; 11:15–18; 12:10–12; 15:3–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–8). Each one makes claims about who is worthy to be worshipped in Heaven and on earth. Revelation calls the people to worship “our God, who sits on the throne” and “the Lamb” (7:10, below). Today’s passage continues John’s vision of Heaven. Several startling events have occurred: the glorious entry of the Lamb into the throne room (Revelation 5:6) and the introduction of a sealed scroll and its opening (5:1; 6:1–17), leading to the dramatic gathering of the servants of God (7:1–8). John then turned his attention to the great multitude of people and witnessed their worship.

Key Verse: Rev 7:14

And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

7:1-3. The question was raised in [6:17](#) whether any would be saved in the Tribulation. This is answered in this chapter, and two classes of the saved are mentioned specifically: (1) those who are saved in Israel, (2) those of all nations who, though saved spiritually, are martyred. **Four angels** were told to withhold judgment on **the earth** until the **servants of... God** were sealed ([v. 3](#)). The **seal on their foreheads** symbolizes protection and ownership and God’s intention to protect the 12 tribes that are mentioned, much as He protected Noah from the Flood, Israel from the plagues of Egypt, and Rahab and her household in Jericho.

7:4-8. John heard the names of 12 **tribes** with **12,000** from each **tribe... sealed** and thus protected. The 12 tribes are not “lost” as some contend. Attempts have been made to identify the 12 tribes here with the church, mostly to avoid the implication that this is literally **Israel**. The fact that specific tribes were mentioned and specific numbers from each tribe were indicated would seem to remove this from the symbolic and to justify literal interpretation. If God intended these verses to represent Israel literally, He would have used this means. Nowhere else in the Bible do a dozen references to the 12 tribes mean the church. Obviously Israel will be in the Tribulation, and though men do not know the identification of each tribe today, certainly God knows. Much speculation has arisen about why the tribe of Dan is omitted. Joseph and one of his two sons, Manasseh, are listed, but Ephraim, Joseph’s other son, is omitted. Thus if Dan were included, there would have been 13 tribes. According to J.B. Smith, Scripture contains 29 lists of the tribes of Israel in the Old and New Testaments and in no case are more than 12 tribes mentioned (*A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 130). The tribe omitted was usually Levi, from which the priesthood came. Inasmuch as it is normal to have only 12 and not 13 tribes, the omission of Dan is not significant. Perhaps Dan was omitted here because it was one of the first tribes to go into idolatry ([Jud. 18:30](#); cf. [1 Kings](#)

12:28-29). However, Dan is mentioned in Ezekiel 48:2 in the millennial land distribution. The most important fact taught here is that God continues to watch over Israel even in the time of Israel's great distress. There is no justification whatever for spiritualizing either the number or the names of the tribes in this passage, to make them represent the church.

7:9-12. Then John saw a **multitude** of people **from every nation, tribe, people, and language**, who were **standing before the throne** (i.e., before God the Father) **and in front of the Lamb** (i.e., God the Son). This is the same group mentioned in 6:9, but here they were **wearing white robes** and **holding palm branches**, apparently signifying righteous triumph. As this multitude ascribed salvation to God and to the Lamb, **all the angels**, the **24 elders**, and the **4 living creatures** joined them in worship as they did in 5:9-10.

7:13-17. **One of the 24 elders asked** about the origin of those who stood in **white robes**. Is it not significant that if the 24 elders represent the church these described here are a different group of the saved? When John indicated that he did not know the answer (v. 14a) the elder himself answered the question as to who this multitude was and where they came from: **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**. It seems evident that these "who have come out of the Great Tribulation" have been martyred and were then safe in heaven. They were given the special privilege of being before God's **throne** and serving **Him day and night in His temple**. They were protected by God Himself and never again would they experience **hunger... thirst, or scorching heat**, with the implication that this was their experience of suffering on earth. They were under the special shepherd-care of **the Lamb** and were drinking from **springs of living water**. The narration concludes with the comforting truth that all their tears would be wiped away. The two groups seen by John were the 144,000 Israelites and a great multitude from every nation, including some Israelites who were not thus protected and who were martyred in the Great Tribulation. A natural explanation of these two groups is that neither represents the church, the body of Christ in the present Age, because both groups are distinguished from the 24 elders and neither group is clearly identified with the church in this present dispensation. The events of this chapter, like those in other chapters to follow, do not advance the narrative but are a pause in the description of the events to spotlight a concentrated revelation on a special feature, in this case the answer to the question of 6:17, "Who can stand?" Though the chapters of Revelation are not all in chronological sequence, chapter 7 depicts a scene in heaven which precedes the second coming of Christ to the earth. Those seen in heaven were said to "come out of the Great Tribulation" (v. 14). The chapter accordingly indicates how they will be marvelously blessed in heaven after their trials on earth. The 144,000 will appear again (14:1-5), and the multitude of martyrs who were killed for refusing to worship the beast appear again at the time of the resurrection in 20:4. That they are not millennial saints should be evident from the fact that they will be in heaven before God's throne, and will have been resurrected.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Praising Through Acknowledgement of Jesus (Rev 7:9-12)

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Acknowledgement from the multitude (9-10)

Acknowledgement by bowing down before God (Ps 22:27)

27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,

Acknowledgement by many people coming to the mountain of God (Isa 2:3)

3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Acknowledgement by inhabitants of many cities coming to entreat God (Zech 8:20-22)

20 This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, 21 and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going.' 22 And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him."

Acknowledgement by Gentiles singing praises (Rom 15:8-11)

8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs 9 so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." 10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples."

Commentary about the palm in their hands (from Barnes' Notes)

[And palms in their hands] Emblems of victory. Branches of the palm-tree were carried by the victors in the athletic contests of Greece and Rome, and in triumphal processions. See the notes on Matt 21:8. The palm-tree-straight, elevated, majestic-was an appropriate emblem of triumph. The portion of it which was borne in victory was the long leaf which shoots out from the top of the tree. Compare the notes on Isa 3:26. See Eschenberg, Manual of Class. Literally, p. 243, and Lev 23:40: "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees," etc. So in the Saviour's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12-13) - "On the next day much people took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna."

Acknowledgement from the angels (11-12)

Acknowledgement from the angels who are present at the assembly (Heb 12:22)

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

Acknowledgement from the angels who obey God's word (Ps 103:20-21)

Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. 21 Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

Acknowledgement from the angels singing about the worthiness of Jesus (Rev 5:11-12)

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Acknowledgement from the angels whom God commanded to worship Jesus (Heb 1:6)

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Praising from the Blood-Washed Witnesses (Rev 7:13-17)

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Symbols (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

A white robe is the customary baptismal garb in many churches. The color white has long symbolized purity. One of the grim ironies of life is how symbols of goodness and holiness have been misappropriated by the forces of evil. An example is how white robes became a symbol of virulent racism. After America's Civil War, men dressed in white robes and wearing white hoods brought a reign of terror on African-American citizens. Such ideology continues to have influence even in the early twenty-first century. How ghastly it is that some members of such organizations even thought of themselves as "good Christians." Some even were ministers! In today's text John sees a multitude of God's people dressed in white standing before his throne. Their robes are a symbol of the righteousness they had found in Christ; their robes are not cloaks for evil deeds and attitudes. Can you think of other ways in which holy symbols are misappropriated to disguise sin?

Washed in the Blood (13-14)

Commentary on Rev 7:14 from Barnes Notes

The word rendered "tribulation" - thlipsis - is a word of general character, meaning "affliction," though perhaps there is here an allusion to persecution. The sense, however, would be better expressed by the phrase great trials. The object seems to have been to set before the mind of the apostle a view of those who had suffered much, and who by their sufferings had been sanctified and prepared for heaven, in order to encourage those who might be yet called to suffer. In reference to their robes being washed in the blood of the Lamb, there is some incongruity in saying that they had made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and the meaning therefore must be, that they had cleansed or purified them in that blood. Under the ancient ritual, various things about the sanctuary were cleansed from ceremonial defilement by the sprinkling of blood on them—the blood of sacrifice. In accordance with that usage, the blood of the Lamb—of the Lord Jesus—is said to cleanse and purify. John sees a great company with white robes. The means by which it is said they became white or pure is the blood of the Lamb. It is not said that they were made white as the result of their sufferings or their afflictions but by the blood of the Lamb. The course of thought here is such that it would be natural to suppose that, if at any time the great deeds or the sufferings of the saints could contribute to the fact that they will wear white robes in heaven, this is an occasion on which there might be such a reference. But there is no allusion to that. It is not by their own sufferings and trials, their persecutions and sorrows, that they are made holy, but by the blood of the Lamb that had been shed for sinners. This reference to the blood of the Lamb is one of the incidental proofs that occur so frequently in the Scriptures of the reality of the atonement. It could be only in allusion to that, and with an implied belief in that, that the blood of the Lamb could be referred to as cleansing the robes of the saints in heaven. If he sheds his blood merely as other people have done; if he died only as a martyr, what propriety would there have been in referring to his blood more than to the blood of any other martyr? And what influence could the blood of any martyr have in cleansing the robes of the saints in heaven? The fact is, that if that were all, such language would be unmeaning. It is never used except in connection with the blood of Christ; and the language of the Bible everywhere is such as would be employed on the supposition that he shed his blood to make expiation for sin, and on no other supposition. On the general meaning of the language used here, and the sentiment expressed, see the notes on Heb 9:14 and 1 John 1:7.

the ones who come out

ἐρχόμενοι [erchomenoi] , present participle. They are continually coming out—probably the result of ongoing persecution resulting in martyrdom, although the text does not explicitly indicate martyrdom. “Present middle participle with the idea of continued repetition. ‘The martyrs are still arriving from the scene of the great tribulation.’”² “Therefore the Rapture of the church is not in view in this verse, since it is a single, instantaneous, and sudden event (cf. 1Cor. 15:51-52).”³

the great tribulation

Literally, the tribulation, the great. “ ‘The tribulation,’ points to a definite prophetic period, and not simply to tribulation in general in which all saints shared. ‘The great tribulation’ cannot be the general troubles that affect God’s people in all ages. The insertion of the definite article marks its speciality.”⁴ This is the unique time of intense tribulation which Jesus predicted (Matt. 24:21). During this time, multitudes will die; both unbelievers in judgment and believers through martyrdom and harsh conditions (as these, Rev. 14:13). “And unless those days were shorted, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matt. 24:22). This is the “hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). This time of trouble will be especially difficult for the Jewish nation (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1, 7; Matt. 24:16-20). Yet even this Great Tribulation cannot separate the faithful from the love of Christ, for they are overcomers (Rom. 8:35-39).

As we have discussed elsewhere, the Church is not appointed to God’s wrath and is exempted from this “hour or trial which God brings upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). These believers are those who come to faith after the rapture of the Church.

It is interesting to note the accuracy which attends predictions made by those who take Scripture at face value. Walter Scott (1796-1861), writing well in advance of the establishment of Israel in 1948, says of this verse: “ ‘The great tribulation’ is yet future. **It pre-supposes the Jewish nation restored to Palestine in unbelief**, to serve Gentile political ends, and brought there by the active intervention of a great maritime power (Isa. 18).” [emphasis added]⁵ Since 1948, Scott’s words, which reflect God’s Word, have come to pass.

washed their robes

NU has “freed” (λύσαντι [lysanti]) whereas MT has “washed” (λούσαντι [lousanti]) - a difference of a single Greek letter. Scripture describes both as being true of the believer who has been set free (Matt. 20:28; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 1Ti. 2:6; Heb. 9:12; 1Pe 1:18; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4) and washed, a picture of spiritual cleansing (Ps. 51:4; Isa. 1:16-18; Eze. 36:25; Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 2:14; 3:5; Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 2Pe. 1:9). The imagery of the immediate passage, in His own blood , argues for the latter as does internal evidence elsewhere in the book (Rev. 7:14).

Whereas loved us is in the present tense, washed us is in the aorist tense. The provision for our redemption, His death on the cross which washes away all our sin both past and future, is accomplished and its full merits are applied in full the moment we believe. Yet He continually loves us.

A bloodless gospel is an ineffectual gospel. For it is by the spilling of blood that God has chosen to atone for sin (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22).

Why did God choose blood for this purpose? Ultimately, we may never know, for the “secret things belong to the LORD our God” (Deu. 29:29). Scripture reveals that the use of blood for atonement is related to its life-giving qualities (Gen. 9:4). The “life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11). “Life” in this verse is Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ [nephesh] , the same term which is translated “soul” where Scripture records the once-for-all atonement made by Isaiah’s Suffering Servant: “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin” [emphasis added] (Isa. 53:10). By His blood atonement, Jesus was prophesied to “sprinkle many nations” (Isa. 52:15), thus fulfilling the many OT types pointing to Him.

It was by blood sacrifice that the first man and woman were covered in response to their sin (Gen. 3:21). It was by blood sacrifice that the first men were to approach God (Gen. 4:4). It was by a blood sacrifice that God established His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:9-21). It was by blood placed on the door posts and

lintel that the Jews were “covered” from the destroyer Who passed over Egypt taking the firstborn of each family (Exodus. 12:23). It was by the sprinkling of blood that the Mosaic Law was ratified between God and the Israelites (Exodus. 24:8). Ever since the bloodless offering of Cain (Gen. 4:3-5), man has attempted to approach God by some other means than that which God Himself has established. These would try to circumvent the single path which God requires: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’ ” (John 14:6)

This necessity of blood offering is offensive to man, and we believe intentionally so. For it is a messy business and continual reminder of man’s lack of righteousness (Rom. 3:23) and his desperate need of the “righteousness of God,” a righteousness which is freely given rather than earned (Rom. 3:21-26; 2Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:9). Yet many prefer to continue in the way of religion rather than relationship, offering up their own puny works in a vain attempt to justify themselves before a perfect and Holy God (Rom. 10:3). Religion preserves our pride, whereas relationship requires us to cast it aside.

made them white

ἐλευκάναν [eleukanan] , used to describe making blood-red stains due to sin become white (Isa. 1:18).⁶ It may picture not only their salvation (washing away their sins), but also the exchange of garments bloodied by their persecution on earth for clean garments from God.

in the blood of the Lamb

The garments of many were no doubt stained with their own blood. Still, it is the blood of the Lamb which is required for salvation. Their blood, while precious to God (Ps. 116:15) and spilled as a testimony to God, lacks any redemptive power. See commentary on Revelation 1:5 and Revelation 5:9.

Washed in the blood to make them holy (Heb 13:12)

12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

Washed in the blood for redemption (1 Peter 1:17-19)

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

We were purchased by the blood that is used for the washing (Rev 5:9)

9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Washed in the blood to overcome Satan, the accuser (Rev 12:10-11)

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Washed in the blood for sanctification (1 Cor 6:11)

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Washed in the blood to cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death (Heb 9:13-14)

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Washed in the blood to obtain fellowship with God (1 John 1:7)

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Blood of the Lamb (15-17)

Commentary on Rev 7:17 from Tony Garland

the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne

Not only the Father dwells among them (Rev. 7:15), they will also be in intimate association with the Son who Himself is in the midst of the throne. Because of their faithful witness amidst chaos and intense persecution, they now enjoy the benefits which many others will not experience until the eternal state (Rev. 21:3; 22:3).

will shepherd them

In place of the worthless shepherd who feeds himself on the sheep (Zec. 11:15-17), they will be led by the True Shepherd out of Judah who was stricken on their behalf (Matt. 2:6; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; John 10:2-16). God, who scattered the sheep of Israel, will one day gather them again (Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Eze. 34:11-31; Mic. 5:4; Matt. 2:6).

living fountains of waters

He leads them to the still waters which restore the soul (Ps. 23:1-2). This is the living water which the same Shepherd promised the Samaritan woman (John 4:10-11) and which believers in the church age experience through the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39).¹ This water is available freely to all who thirst (Rev. 21:6). It is the river of life which will ultimately be found flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, watering the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-2). In the Millennial Kingdom, a fountain of living water will flow from Jerusalem and revive all that it touches (Eze. 47:12; Zec. 14:8).

wipe away every tear

Many of the tears they had shed were due to their experience of death—both of loved ones and themselves. But God has swallowed up death forever and promised to wipe away every tear (Isa. 25:8). In their joy, their sorrow and sighing will flee away (Isa. 35:10; 51:11). Even in the Millennial Kingdom, great joy will be experienced (Isa. 65:19). Ultimately, in the eternal state, there will be no more pain and the former things (e.g., sin and the curse) shall pass away and all cause for tears will be gone (Rev. 21:4).

*Converts during the tribulation will have to face fierce and bestial persecution at the hands of their fellow-men, and also have to endure the natural tribulations which God will unleash on all mankind as a consequence of the sins of the human race. Yes, it will be possible to be saved during the tribulation, but it is infinitely better and imminently sensible to accept Jesus Christ as one's Savior now, before the tribulation. [emphasis added]*²

Blood of the Lamb that paid the guilt offering (Lev 14:25)

25 He shall slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot.

Blood of the Lamb that takes away sin (John 1:29)

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus is our Passover Lamb who was sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7)

7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Allen Carr

Revelation 7:9-17

A MULTITUDE NO MAN COULD NUMBER

Intro: As we continue to move through the book of the Revelation, we are in the middle of a parenthetical passage. **Chapter seven** is inserted into the narrative to allow us to catch a glimpse of the grace of God at work during the most horrible time earth has ever known.

In our last study, we saw the Lord redeem 144,000 Jewish men. These men were sent out into the entire world to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations. In this passage, we will see the fruits of their preaching, as a vast multitude is brought to faith in Jesus Christ and is delivered out of the Great Tribulation.

It comforts my heart to know that the Rapture of the church does not spell the end of people being saved. I praise the Lord that He intends to redeem a multitude that no man could number during the dark years of the Tribulation Period. This passage reveals the heart of our great God. It is in His heart and plan to save sinners, and He is going to do just that during the Tribulation.

The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ came into this world for the sole purpose of saving sinners from their sins, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”* **1 Timothy 1:15**. It is also clear that God intends to save every person who will turn to Jesus by faith, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,”* **John 6:37**. Here is God’s promise to His elect, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,”* **2 Peter 3:9**. That is the heartbeat of God and it can be heard in the verses before us today.

Let’s go back into the heart of the tribulation period and rejoin John in his vision of that terrible time. In these verses, we are going to learn about a vast multitude of redeemed saints, and we are going to get a glimpse into glory as the curtain is pulled back just a little. So, let’s take these verses and consider the subject: ***A Multitude That No Man Could Number***. I want to share some facts about this precious group of saints that are presented in these verses.

I. v. 9-12 THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS MULTITUDE

A. v. 9 **How They Are Shown** – Reading John’s description of this multitude reveals a number of things about who these people are.

1. **Their Number** – They are described as “a multitude which no man could number.” They are a group of people so vast that John makes no attempt at all to declare their number. What a wonderful image of the grace of God.

On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls were saved, **Acts 2:41**. Some time later, 5,000 were saved on one occasion, **Acts 4:4**. We are also told that God *“added daily to the church such as should be saved”*, **Acts 2:47**. I read that and I am amazed at His saving power! But wait, about 1,000,000 were saved in Nineveh when the entire city repented and turned to faith in God, **Jonah 3:5-10**. Praise God for His saving grace. Even more amazing than that is the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Over 3,000,000 were saved by grace when they placed the blood on the doorposts of their houses by faith, **Ex. 12**.

All of these great demonstrations of the powerful, saving grace of God pale in comparison to what He will do during the Tribulation Period! God will save a multitude that will number in the multiplied millions! Praise God for His grace!

2. **Their Nationalities** – We are told that they come from *“all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues”*. Here is a multitude that knows no racial, economic, social, or national distinctions. The Gospel has been preached worldwide, without respect to any people group and a vast multitude is saved. They are Gentiles and they have been saved by grace. In the first nine verses of this chapter, God dealt with Jews. Now, He extends His grace to the Gentile nations of the world.

(Note: I praise the Lord that the Gospel of grace is a message that applies to all people everywhere. We have our prejudices and we judge people by the color of their skin; by their ethnic background; by

how they were raised; and by many other foolish, ignorant standards. God, however, holds no such prejudices! He will save any soul that will come to Him by faith! I praise God that it is that way. After all, if Jesus was a racist, us white folks would be in trouble!)

(Note: I would also like to remind us that the Gospel message is not a Baptist message either. You may have heard the old story about a wall in Heaven, and behind that wall there was a group of people just shouting and praising the Lord. One fellow, who was new to Heaven, asked another fellow what was going on behind that wall. The man answered, “*Oh, that the Baptists, they think they are the only ones up here!*”

There are some Baptists who think that way! I have been accused of being so narrow-minded that I think only the Baptists are going. Well, I am even more narrow-minded than that! I don't believe that all Baptists are going!

I praise the Lord that it isn't just the Baptists that are going to Heaven! Any person who will believe the Gospel, anywhere in this world will be saved and will go to Heaven.

But, I still praise the Lord that I am a Baptist! If someone asked me what I would be if I was not a Baptist, I would reply that “*I'd be ashamed!*” I don't think the Baptists are right about everything, just most things! I am a Baptist because I think they are closer to the truth than any other group on earth. I know that being a Baptist won't get me to Heaven, but it will let me go there in still! The difference between being a Baptist and being anything else is the difference between driving a Yugo and a Rolls-Royce. That was a public service announcement. Now, back to the message.)

3. **Their Natures** – Some people look at this multitude and see the church. This multitude is not the church! First, they are “*standing*”. When the church is shown in Heaven, they are sitting, **Rev. 4:4**. Second, this crowd was saved out of “*Great Tribulation*”, **v. 14**. The church will be saved from that terrible time of wrath and judgment, **1 Thes. 1:10; Rom. 5:9; Rev. 3:10**. While they are not the church, their appearance and condition in Heaven is clearly described.

a. **They Are Virtuous** – They are “*clothed with white robes*”. This is always a picture of righteousness in the Bible. These people are saved by grace and they have been rendered righteous. That is the promise of God to all who will come to Jesus Christ by faith, **1 John 1:7; Isa. 1:18**. He is in the saving and cleansing business!

(Note: I praise the name of the Lord that the blood of Jesus is able to reconcile us to God. When Jesus died, the wall of separation that had been erected by sin was forever torn down and now, we can be reconciled with God, **Eph. 1:6-7; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16**.)

b. **They Are Victorious** – These redeemed saints have palm branches in their hands. Palms are a symbol of victory. The crowds waved palm branches and placed them in the road as Jesus entered Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, **John 12:13**. These saints are celebrating the great victory that was given to them over sin, Satan and the power of the Antichrist. They have overcome and they enjoy the spoils of the victory they have been given.

B. v. 10 **What They Shout** – These saints lift their voices in an anthem of praise to their Redeemer for His redemption. They know that they are in Heaven for one reason and for one reason only. They are there because of the grace of God and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They praise Him for His great grace!

(Note: If there was ever a reason for praise, it is the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins! His salvation is the one reason for praise that all saints share. Our circumstances may change and we may walk through hard places in life, but if you are saved, your name is written down in Heaven and it always will be. That is a reason for praise, for shouting, for singing, for testimony, for all the glory we can render unto our great God, **Luke 10:20**. By the way, we are way behind in the praise department!)

C. v. 11-12 **What They Stimulate** – When the angelic host around the throne of God witness the unbridled praise of this redeemed multitude, they join their voices with them in praise to God. The shouts of the multitude inspire the angels to praise the Lord too. Can you imagine the sound of millions and millions of voices joined together in an anthem of praise?

Now, the angels lift their voices and cry “*Amen!*” Thus, they add their agreement to the praises of the redeemed. They add a seven-fold statement of glory to God and praise Him for Who He is and for what He does. They know what they have said is true, so they close their statement of praise with another “*Amen!*”

The angels cannot praise God for salvation, for they have never known the depths of sin. But, these angels have seen the love of God in action as He went about the business of saving lost humans. They marveled as they watched as their Creator, the Lord Jesus, died on Calvary to save people who despised Him. They have witnessed the spontaneous outbursts of praise as sinners have been saved down through the ages, **Luke 15:7**. Praising God for salvation is a human privilege

I. The Description Of This Multitude

II. v. 13-14 THE DELIVERANCE OF THIS MULTITUDE

(III. As John watches this powerful scene, one of the elders approaches him and asks John about the identity of this vast throng of people. John declares his ignorance of their identity and petitions the elder to tell him who they are. He proceeds to do just that.)

A. **The Ministry Of Their Deliverance** – John is told that these are people who “*came out of great tribulation.*” These people have been living through the horrors of the Tribulations Period. But, even during that time of intense wrath and judgment, there is a ray of light as the amazing, boundless grace of God reaches down to touch a vast multitude of lost souls.

B. **The Method Of Their Deliverance** – These people were saved the same way people have always been, and will always be, saved: by grace through faith, **Eph. 2:8-9**. We are told that they “*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” This simple statement reveals a profound truth: God only knows on method of salvation.

Whether it was Adam and Eve in the Garden; Abel with his sacrifice; Abraham and his ram; Israel and the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and the Temple; salvation in the Old Testament was through the blood of the Lamb. When they shed the blood of an innocent animal to atone for their sins, they were looking ahead to the day when God would send the perfect sacrifice that would take away sin forever. Those Old Testament saints were saved by looking forward to Calvary. When Jesus came and went to the cross, He accomplished what millions of animal sacrifices could only picture. When Jesus dies, He obtained eternal salvation for all who will believe on Him, **Heb. 10:10-14; 9:28**.

Those of us on this side of the cross are saved by looking back to what Jesus did at the cross and realizing that His death and resurrection are all that is needed to our salvation. When we trust Him by faith, we are eternally saved, **Rom. 10:9-10**. even in the midst of Great Tribulation, souls will be saved by the simple preaching of a simple Gospel. Here it is once again: “*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*”, **1 Cor. 15:3-4**.

I. The Description Of This Multitude

II. The Deliverance Of This Multitude

III. v. 15-17 THE DESTINY OF THIS MULTITUDE

A. **They Are Destined To A Heavenly Presence** – We are told in **verse 15** that this multitude finds themselves at home in Heaven in the presence of Almighty God. Their days of suffering and sorrow have ended and they have arrived in glory. They are no longer separated from the Lord by distance, by sin or by time. They are home with Him and they are there to stay!

Notice where they are! Because they have been redeemed and cleansed, they are allowed to stand in the presence of God! This was unheard of in Bible times. In the Temple there was a place called the “*Court of the Gentiles*”. This was the outer court of the Temple and non-Jews were not allowed to go any deeper into the Temple complex than this outer court. To do so brought a Gentile under the penalty of death.

When Jesus died, the veil in the Temple was ripped down the middle, **Matt. 27:51**. This signified the fact that all men had equal access to God. These redeemed Gentiles are brought into the very presence of God.

Their present condition must make Satan livid with rage! **Verse 14** tells us that they “*came out of great tribulation*”. These people are in Heaven because they were martyred for their faith in Jesus and for their refusal to embrace the Antichrist and their king and as their god. It is possible that these precious saints are the same crowd we saw praying from under the altar in **Rev. 6:9-11**. Now, their prayers are answered, they are home and judgment is being handed out upon the earth. The worst thing Satan could do to these people was to kill them, and it turned out to be the best thing that

ever happened to them. They gave up the pain and sorrow of a world gone made for the safety and joy of an eternity in the presence of God!

B. **They Are Destined To A Heavenly Profession** – The Bible says they will “*serve Him day and night in His temple*”. This joyous, redeemed multitude is in the presence of God and they are at the beck and call of God. They will spend their eternity carrying out His will as they serve Him, worship Him and bask in His presence.

(**Note:** By the way, never think for an instant that Heaven will be a boring place. We will not twiddle our thumbs, bored stiff while eternity passes us by. We will be busy serving the Lord. There will be plenty to do. I am convinced that just our praise and worship time will be enormous. We will rest from our labors, but we will not rest from our service to Almighty God. He’s got a job for you over there!

By the way, there’s no place to quit over here either! Oh, you might step aside and let someone else do a job. There comes a time when it is time for a change. There comes a time when it is time for “*new blood*” in some offices. However, there will never come a time this side of the grave when you can rightfully sit down on God and quit. As long as He leaves you here, He has a work for you to do. Get before Him, find out what it is, and get to it!)

C. **They Are Destined To Heavenly Provisions** – Now, remember, these saints were saved out of the Tribulation Period. They had been saved, but they had also suffered with everyone else on earth. Just because they turned to the Lord does not mean that they were sheltered from the horrors of those days. In fact, their faith in Jesus Christ might have made their lives even more miserable here on earth. Remember, the book of Revelation is not in chronological order. We are seeing people who are martyred throughout the years of Tribulation. We are told several things about their past and about what they can anticipate in Heaven.

- **They will hunger no more** – Remember the famines we talked about in **Rev. 6:5-6**? We are also told that Antichrist will require people to wear a mark in their bodies before they can buy or sell, **Rev. 13:16-18**. Because of their faith, they will refuse the mark and will go hungry. The Bible also says that their refusal to wear the mark will be a death warrant to them, **Rev. 13:15**. But, we are told that in Heaven, the Lamb will feed them! There will be no more hunger in glory. They are home and they will be well cared for!

- **They will thirst no more** – We are told that the waters of the earth will turn to blood and be unfit to drink during the Tribulation, **Rev. 8:8; 11**. As a result, the people of earth will be thirsty. But, in Heaven, they are led to fountains of living water by the Lamb. They are satisfied there.

- **They will suffer no more** – The references to the sun and the heat remind us that the Tribulation Period will be a period of intense physical suffering, and the redeemed saints of God will not be immune from the effects of God’s judgments upon nature. In **Rev. 16:8-10**, the intensity of the sun will be greatly increased causing dehydrated men great pain and suffering. They will literally chew their tongues in their pain and agony. But, in Heaven, none of the things that hurt them on earth will be allowed to follow them there.

- **They will weep no more** – Imagine all they have seen and suffered because of their faith. Their hearts have been broken and their eyes wet with tears even as they gave their all for Jesus Christ. But, the Lamb of God will wipe away the tears of their suffering and sorrow. He will comfort them and give them rest, peace and blessing.

- By the way, these blessings are ours as well, **Rev. 21-22!**

Conc: I praise God that He is a soul-saving God. I praise Him that He reaches down in grace to call lost sinners to Him that He might save them. It comforts my heart to know that He is coming to continue to do this even during the Tribulation Period. We ought to praise Him for His saving grace and power.

As I think about this multitude today, I know that neither I, nor anyone in this room, will ever be a part of that number. If you are saved, you will see them one day and watch as they shout their praises unto the God and the Lamb. If you are not saved today and Jesus comes back, you will never have another opportunity to be saved.

So, here is the invitation:

- If you are lost and would like to be saved, come to Jesus today and let us show you how you can come to know Jesus.
- If you are saved, but there are issues between you and the Lord that need to be addressed, you come and make it right.
- If you want to thank Him for His grace and blessings in your life, you come.
- If you would like to pray from some lost people on your heart, you come.
- If there are other needs, this altar is open.

(Adapted from URL:http://www.sermonnotebook.org/revelation/Revelation%207_9-17.htm)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Suffering was no stranger to American poet Fanny Crosby (1820–1915). Blind since infancy, she undoubtedly experienced many trials and challenges. In spite of all those, she was able to proclaim, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine . . . Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.” A prolific writer of more than 8,000 songs, this is just one of Crosby’s compositions that speak of Jesus’ blood. In the midst of her suffering, Crosby was yet able to praise and worship God for salvation available through the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7 is a high point in the Bible concerning worship and praise. This passage is timely for all audiences. It acknowledges that although suffering occurs, confident hope is always called for because of the salvation bought and brought by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus. In times of joy or suffering, that fact should unite us in praise and worship. May we be a people who live in hope as we await the day when we will hunger and thirst no more, the day of no more tears. Until that day, may our lives be marked with praise and worship to the God who sits on his heavenly throne and to the Lamb who brings salvation.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Revelation of Worship - The apostle John, the author of the Book of Revelation, recorded his vision of future events. He observed a numberless multitude of worshipers before the throne of God and the Lamb. The individuals represented a variety of nations, tribes, and tongues. This crowd praised their redeemer for His sacrificial blood on the Cross on their behalf. Other beings in heaven, including angels, elders, and the four living creatures, also joined in with choruses of praise.

Cleaned for Worship - The people John saw in white robes are symbolic of freedom from sin, no spot nor wrinkle, or any such thing before God's throne. This kind of cleansing became a reality by the believers depending on the blood and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. How dare any individual believe his own merits and works will allow him to stand in the presence of God! Self-effort is useless in the face of God Almighty and His perfect Son. The palm branches usually indicate a symbol of victory, joy, and triumph. The overcomers are celebrating their salvation and complete deliverance.

Permanent Praise - Finally, this population stands in the very presence of God. They permanently enter the throne room—no barriers, no waiting, no pressing. They now have triumphed over the afflictions on earth. As a result, day and night, they bow before Jesus in gratitude. He is at the center of the throne, the slain sacrifice now recognized as the risen Redeemer. He takes His place as the ultimate Shepherd over the entire flock of sheep. Jesus guides the sheep to the water, symbolic of abundance and eternal life. Every tear is wiped from their eyes, with no more sorrow or pain. The struggles of this world are gone forever.

Our Worship - In more than one place in Scripture we read of multitudes gathering together to praise and worship God. If circumstances temporarily prevent us from experiencing such community worship, we can bring favorite worship songs to mind. As we gather for worship with other believers in the here and now, we praise God in song. We also look forward to worshipping God in heaven, knowing we will each be there at that magnificent celebration.