

**Sermon Text: Revelation 7:9-17** <sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen." <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> "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. <sup>16</sup> "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; <sup>17</sup> "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."

**Sermon Theme: Insights into the Future World for the Saints of Heaven.**

- 1. The multiplicity and vast number of people in heaven.**
- 2. The cause of their being there**
- 3. The kind of blessed life which they enjoy there**

In the name of the Lamb of God Jesus Christ who died and rose again as our Savior in order to give us everlasting life in heaven, dear fellow redeemed;

If you were given an opportunity to look into the future, what would you like to see? In our younger years, there is a curiosity about what we will turn out to be and do, and how we will fare in life. Later on in life we might like to know how the younger generation in our family will fare and what our life will be like in our declining years. Looking still further down the road on into eternity, each of us would undoubtedly be very much interested in knowing who among our family members, friends, and acquaintances will end up in heaven and also learn about what that heavenly world will be like.

While we do not have a crystal ball for peering into the future, we do have God's revelations in the Bible which provide us with some insights into the future. And while the Bible doesn't give us all the information we are curious about, yet it reveals everything we need to know about the future life in this world and in the heavenly world to come.

By way of a special vision the apostle John received and recorded in the book of Revelation a glimpse of heaven and what our eternal life there will be like. Through the means of symbolic pictures we are enabled to see the multiplicity and vast number of

believers in heaven, the cause of Christians being there, and the kind of blessed life we will enjoy in heaven.

As John beholds the glorious sight of all the many citizens of heaven, he makes no mention of their names. Oh, there are other places in the Bible where names of believers in heaven are recorded, such as in Hebrews 11. However, we aren't going to find our name or the names of family members and friends written in the Bible as being among those who will be in heaven. John's vision does help us out in this regard though, as the apostle tells of seeing "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."

What a wonderful and comforting thing it is for us and people around the world to know there will be a vast number of believers from all over this globe who will have a share in that future heavenly life in eternity. Not only is the large number of saints in heaven reassuring to us, but also that God doesn't discriminate against folks on the basis of race, color, or nationality when it comes to welcoming us into His heavenly kingdom. As God looks down upon us, He views all of us as being very precious and important to Him. So broad and so vast is God's love for us that He gave His Son the huge mission of redeeming the whole world from sin and eternal death. And on the basis of that same far-reaching love Jesus gave His Church the commission of going out into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone. So, the gospel invitation to become a part of God's kingdom of grace here in time and His kingdom of glory hereafter in eternity is to be extended to all people.

As vast as that number will be of those entering the kingdom of glory in heaven, the number will not include everyone who walked upon the face of this earth, as the universalists would have us believe. Jesus sets the record straight by declaring in His sermon on the mount, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Mt. 7:13,14) In other words, relatively few are those who by the grace of God are found on the narrow and difficult path that leads to eternal life in heaven. Of the many who do end up in heaven not everyone who has some kind of religion will be there, for Jesus reveals, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Mt. 7:21) Jesus' reference to doing the will of His Father in order to go to heaven is not talking about keeping the commandments of God's moral law, but rather observing His gracious will of believing in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

In John's vision of heaven, there is a clear indication of how it is the saints of heaven are blessed with the exalted privilege of standing before the throne of God dressed in white robes. With white being a symbol for purity and holiness the saints of heaven are pictured as being righteous, free of any moral defect or blemish. The question of how the saints of heaven attain this blameless condition is answered in these words of Scripture, "These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and

made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The saints of heaven didn’t always have white robes, at least not in this present world, for in this temporal life we do not possess a righteousness or holiness in and of ourselves that avails before God. The prophet Isaiah says of our best efforts in leading a godly life that “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags,” (Is. 64:6), being tainted with sin and imperfection. Never should we who are wearing the spotted garment of sin presume to think we can stand before the judgment seat of God and be accepted by Him on the basis of our own goodness. Jesus tells us in a parable of a man who expected to be a celebrant at the wedding feast in heaven without wearing the special white garment provided by God. In other words, he thought he could make it to heaven on his own without any help from God. Sad to say, because of this the man was cast out into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Our sin-stained garment needs to be completely washed clean of every spot, if we are to be welcomed into heaven. That cleansing is accomplished by the Lamb of God Jesus Christ. The cleansing process pictured in our text is one of the many paradoxes in the Bible which upon first hearing sounds contradictory. The paradox is that the red blood of the Lamb of God washes out all the stains from the robe of our lives and makes them pure white. To the unlearned this washing process sounds a little farfetched until they come to know and believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn.1:7). Our Savior’s holy, precious blood poured out on the cross for our redemption has the cleansing property of removing every spot of sin so that we can stand holy before God dressed in white robes. Again, the will of the Father spoken of earlier in order to enter God’s eternal kingdom is simply this, to repent of all our sins and to believe in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal salvation.

When we wonder about the future eternal fate of our relatives, friends, and acquaintances, our minds can rest easy as we hear them make confession of Jesus being their Savior and as we see them giving evidence of their faith through godly living. Such a Christian faith and life found in our dear loved ones is of utmost concern to us, because we do not want any of them missing when all the saints are dwelling before the throne of God in heaven.

We want all of them there, because of the truly glorious life we will be experiencing in heaven. In John’s vision, that wonderful estate is depicted by believers being seen waving palm branches in the air. This heavenly sight symbolizes the festive joy that is continually found in all the saints of heaven. Every single day in heaven will be a celebration. It will be like having Christmas or Easter everyday, only far, far better.

Citizens of heaven will experience such unending festive joy, because of the glorious life we have in store for us. This blessed heavenly life is expressed in this way in John’s vision, “He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 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.” The expression of God dwelling among us in heaven can also be translated in this way, ‘God spreading His tent over the saved in heaven.’ This gives us the comforting imagery of us dwelling in perfect

safety and complete security under God's almighty, loving care. There will be absolutely nothing that we will lack in heaven, because God will see to it that there is never any hunger or thirst. This says to us that God will provide for all our needs and wants without exception. The picture of the sun not striking us or any heat conveys the blessed truth that we wouldn't suffer under any kind of affliction, trouble, or pain in heaven. And the expression of God wiping away every tear from our eyes tells us of the blessed reality that in heaven there is nothing that will cause us to have any kind of sorrow or sadness. And when we hear of Jesus shepherding us in heaven and leading us to living fountains of waters, we receive the consoling thought of a neverending life of perfect joy under God's loving care. Listen to what Jesus said in John's gospel where He pictured the hearing and believing of His gospel as drinking in the water of life, "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (4:14)

Because our Savior God is solely responsible for our eternal salvation, John could hear the saints of heaven glorifying and praising Him by saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" The angels and other agents of God agreed wholeheartedly with this as they could also be heard saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

As we celebrate our eternal life of salvation in heaven, not only will our lives be filled with worshiping the Lord with words of praise and thanksgiving, but we will also be found willingly and cheerfully living our lives in loving service to God day and night, and this service will not be burdensome or drudgery, but sheer delight.

What a comforting, glorious, and pleasing insight into heaven we receive through John's vision. May this vision of the future be a living reality for us and countless others as we look to Jesus in faith for our eternal salvation. Amen.