

The Praise of Tribulation Saints

Revelation 7:9-17

We return again this morning to the Revelation of Jesus Christ as we endeavor to gain further insight into his glorious plan, as we try to learn more about the consummation of redemptive history. And I have entitled my discourse to you this morning, “The Praise of Tribulation Saints.” We will be in Revelation chapter seven verses nine through 17.

Before we look at the text let me bring you up to date to make sure you maintain the chronology of what we see in the prophetic word. The Church, by this time, has been translated, has been raptured into glory, that being the next event on the prophetic time table. God’s judgment upon unbelieving Israel and the nations of the world will begin soon after the rapture of the Church. In fact, the instantaneous disappearance of millions of Christians will leave the world in chaos, especially the United States. And this will set the stage for the pre kingdom judgments of Daniel’s 70th week and the Second Coming of Israel’s Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the world reeling from this mysterious disappearance a charismatic world leader will arise. He will be called the antichrist, and he will arise out of Europe. Also many believe, as I do, that the Scriptures suggest that during that season of world crisis we will see the events of Gog and Magog begin to occur. We read about this in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 where a Russian led coalition of countries will launch a massive strike against Israel and God will defeat them.

Given the fact that Russian backed Iran is only months away from becoming a nuclear power, it is likely that this could—we don’t know for sure—but this could begin very soon. In fact, the Israelis believe that Iran is about 180 days away from being a nuclear power. And certainly a nuclear armed Iran would be able to quickly take over the world oil markets and not only bring the American economy to its knees, but also be able to strong arm the Arab and Russian allies to help defeat and utterly eliminate Israel. And, sadly, the Obama administration and our country has effectively abandoned Israel insisting on a two state solution to resolve the ongoing Palestinian problem, meaning that they would require the Israelis to basically give much of Jerusalem over to the Palestinians as well as to destroy their communities in Judea and in Samaria. And, of course, the Israelis know that this would be utter suicide, because as soon as they move out Iran moves in, the Iranian backed Hezbollah along with Hamas.

So the invasion of Israel described in Ezekiel 38 and 39, which clearly includes Iran as one of the nations of that Russian led coalition, could be very soon. We don’t know exactly when this will happen. I certainly don’t want to be dogmatic, but we know it is going to happen because the prophetic word tells us so. And ultimately they will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel.

Then with the Islamic nations reeling from a massive defeat you will see a rise of the power of antichrist who will then sign a covenant of peace and protection with Israel which will signal the beginning of Daniel’s 70th week, also known as the seven year tribulation. This phony peace deal depicted in the first seal judgment, the white horse of pseudo peace that will lull the world, including Israel, into a false sense of security and

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give them visions of utopia, will ultimately crumble very quickly. But during that time Israel will finally rebuild their temple, but this, again, is nothing more than the calm before the storm.

God will then unleash the second seal of world wide war followed by the third seal of global famine and then the fourth seal of death through the sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts. And then in the middle of the tribulation, three and a half years after the antichrist has made his covenant with Israel, he will violate his promise. He will desecrate the temple and he will demand that the world worship him. And I might also add that after the rapture of the Church and all through the tribulation period many Jews and many Gentiles will be saved and will be murdered for their Christian testimony. This is described in the fifth seal, and then we know that God will rise to avenge them and we see this in the sixth seal as he unleashes an unprecedented earthquake as well as cosmic disturbances throughout the universe which will cause many men to die and many to commit suicide.

After this John is witness to the sealing of 144,000 male Jews from every tribe of Israel. They will be protected from the ensuing judgments upon the earth. They will be set aside as evangelists to spread the gospel of grace. So John sees this sealing of the 144,000 and then he is suddenly exposed to a new and glorious vision which takes us to our text this morning.

Follow along as I read Revelation chapter seven beginning in verse nine.

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 who are clothed in the 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

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thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down 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."¹

As we witness this amazing scene, I am struck, once again, with the reality that we serve a redeeming God, a saving God. We serve a merciful God, because even in the midst of the outpouring of his wrath, we see him reaching down to save sinners from all over the globe. In fact, this will be the greatest revival in the history of the world. Jesus made it clear that just prior to his return in the days of the tribulation in Matthew 24:14, quote, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."²

In fact, the prophet Joel also adds a description of this great awakening in Joel chapter two beginning in verse 28 we read:

It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see vision. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered.³

Now the language here in Revelation 7:9-17 describes these people that the Lord will reconcile unto himself and deliver out from the horrors of his wrath. And this revival will not only lead to the salvation of many Gentiles, but also to the salvation of ethnic Israel and bring them finally into their land. This, again, was the constant theme of the Old Testament prophets, affirmed, as well, in the New Testament. In fact, the prophet Micah says in chapter four in the first five verses where he describes the future glory of national Israel, that it will be a time when all the people in nations will stream to, quote, "The house of the God of Jacob."⁴ And he goes on to say, "And instruction will go out of Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."⁵

Micah also says in chapter seven and verse 15:

As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles. Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might. They will put their hand on their mouth, Their ears will be deaf.

¹ Revelation 7:9-17.

² Matthew 24:14.

³ Joel 2:28-32.

⁴ Micah 4:2.

⁵ See Micah 4:2.

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They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the LORD our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You. Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.⁶

Friends, we must remember that God is not only glorified in his wrath, but also in his grace. And during the tribulation we see both being manifested where God is glorified in his wrath as well as his mercy and grace. And I constantly marvel at God's love for the Jewish people, people that, for the most part hate us. They hate Christ. But to know that a day is coming, according to Zechariah 12 and verse 10, when "I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem. And they will look at me whom they have pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for him as one weeps for a firstborn."⁷

And then, according to Romans chapter 11 and verse 12 the remnant of the Diaspora will finally become part of the full number of Israel when according to verse 26, "all Israel will be saved."⁸ Then, once again, they will be restored to the position of God's witness nation to the world during the millennial kingdom.

Now, with this background, let's examine the text that we have before us where we see four magnificent scenarios that are rich in theology and literally teeming with comfort and hope for every saint. Here we witness, number one, *saints before the throne*; secondly, *angels around the throne*; thirdly, *worship unto the throne and finally sanctuary of the throne*. I pray that we will all get lost, once again, in the wonder of this celestial court that one day we will see with our own eyes.

First, we see *saints before the throne* in verse nine. We read, "After these things I looked, and behold..."⁹ Now, this is very important. The grammar indicates that this is a totally new and distinct vision from the previous scenario with the 144,000. This is not a continuation of the same. And notice what he sees, "A great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues."¹⁰

Literally he is saying, "These are people from every ethnic group, every culture, every language, a great multitude." These are the ones that he sees coming up out of the great tribulation in verse 14, present tense. They are *coming up out of* the great tribulation. Not

⁶ Micah 7:15-20.

⁷ See Zechariah 12:10.

⁸ Romans 11:19.

⁹ Revelation 7:9.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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to be confused, my friends, with the Church that has been *kept out of* that hour of trial according to Revelation 3:10.

It is important for us to remember that tribulation saints are consistently called saints, but they are never called the Church, the *ekklesia* (ek-klay-see'-ah). In the book of Revelation the term *ekklesia* (ek-klay-see'-ah) shifts from the New Testament where we do not see it anymore after the first three chapters. It is never seen again except in the epilogue where the Lord shifts from speaking prophetically and offers a final word of comfort and admonition to the churches to which this whole book is addressed. But never in chapters four through 19 where we read of all of the judgments upon the world, never do we see the term "Church" applied to any of the saints on the earth, though they appear on several occasions.

Now, this great multitude of tribulation saints is also a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24 and verse 14. There we read, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."¹¹

I want you to notice also what this vast number martyred tribulation saints are doing in verse nine. They are, "standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands."¹² Now, this is still the heavenly throne introduced in chapters four and five. They are standing here before God the Father who is seated upon the throne with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb at his side having received the seals and opening them. And we read also that they are clothed in white robes.

The original language would indicate that these are shining white robes, brilliant white robes and that they are also full length robes, the kind that were worn by the ancients for grand celebrations. These are the same robes of the martyrs described in chapter six verses nine through 11. And here they seem to be primarily emblematic of celebration and victory in Christ. Later in verse 14 they will symbolize righteousness and purity and holiness as we will see. As I was thinking about this I thought, my, what a stark contrast to the black demonic gothic makeup and attire we see in so many people in our culture today.

Now, perhaps these robes are purely symbolic and not literal in that saints here have not yet received their glorified body. Yet, there must be some measure of tangibility to the glorified soul as we witness in the remarkable story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 and the souls of martyrs that we read about in Revelation six that were able to see and hear and speak and are at rest the text tells us. And they even have concern and knowledge for things that are happening on the earth.

But we read here that not only are they clothed in white, but they also have palm branches in their hands. So this must be a magnificent celebration that is being depicted here, a picture of heavenly triumph. You see, waving of palm branches was customary in those ancient days. Whenever there was an oriental celebration.

¹¹ Matthew 24:14.

¹² Revelation 7:9.

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Dr. Robert Thomas has this to say about this particular matter and I quote, “According to oriental thought a palm was a perfect tree because it embodied everything a tree should have. Palm branches were regarded as appropriate at any season of joy or triumph, such as the triumphal entry of Christ in John 12:13. They were prominent at the feast of tabernacles being used to construct the shelters on the housetops required for that occasion,” end quote. And as we will see, the full expression of the feast of tabernacles is now the experience of these dear saints as they bask in the glory of the presence of God as he, according to verse 15, “spreads his tabernacle over them.”

Verse 10 goes on to say that, “they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”¹³ Having confessed their sin and endured the horrors of the persecution at the hands of evil men, they cry out in jubilation celebrating their undeserved salvation. “Salvation to our God,”¹⁴ notice, “who sits on the throne.”¹⁵ Being seated upon the throne symbolizes his sovereignty, his rule over all of creation. And they also say, “And to the Lamb,”¹⁶ the one who purchased their redemption with his very blood.

So, first we see *saints before the throne*, but secondly *angels around the throne*, angels who are now sharing the elation of the heavenly throng. In verse 11 we read, “And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures.”¹⁷ You will recall, according to chapter five and verse 11 the number of these angels are myriads and myriads, a number that cannot be counted. Here the myriads of the angelic hosts join in the celebration not because they have experienced saving grace, but because the triune God has dispensed saving grace and is, therefore, being glorified.

These are the celestial creatures, you will recall, that rejoice over every repentant sinner according to Luke 15:10. These are the ones who, according to 1 Peter 1:12 constantly look on the greatness of salvation with utter fascination longing to understand it better, and now we see them encircling the elders and the four living beings and the tribulation saints before the throne and the glorified Christ. Then in verse 11 we see that they fall on their faces before the throne and worship God saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”¹⁸

So here the angels magnify the tribute of the saints and this leads us to the third element of this vision and that is *worship unto the throne*. The angels begin by saying, “Amen,” which is a solemn affirmation of the holy and sovereign God before whom they have now prostrated themselves. Next, the angelic worship erupts into a seven-fold doxology of praise. First we see the word “blessing,” *eulogia* (yoo-log-ee’-ah) in Greek. It literally

¹³ Revelation 7:10.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Revelation 7:11.

¹⁸ Revelation 7:12.

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means “good speaking,” but this is praise now to the one true God. And then, secondly, the word “glory,” *doxa* (dox’-ah) which means “to give glory and honor,” here to the one who has worked this incredible work of reconciling sinners to himself. Then, thirdly, wisdom, “wisdom,” *sophia* (sof-ee’-ah), the idea here of extolling the marvels of his plan of redemption that exceed the limits of our imagination. Then, fourthly, thanksgiving, *eucharistia* (yoo-khar-is-tee’-ah). It depicts the idea of extreme gratitude for God’s glorious grace and the victory of his love. And then the word “honor,” from *timao* (tim-ah’-o) which means “highest esteem.” Here they acknowledge the divine accomplishment of his plan of redemption. Sixthly, they use the word “power,” *dunamis* (doo’-nam-is) extolling his omnipotent power that has conquered Satan, conquered sin, conquered death. And, finally, “might,” *iscus* (is-khoos’), the word “strength.” Here they exalt God because of his infinite strength to deliver this vast throng of martyrs from the kingdom of darkness and from the wrath of God that is being poured out upon the wicked. Then they conclude with yet another “Amen” affirming, once again, the merit of their tribute.

And, finally, the scene reveals something else, and I believe this is the most precious truth of this whole vision. Here we see the glories of heaven in the sanctuary of the throne. “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?’”¹⁹ Now, friends, you must understand. The elder here is not seeking information as if he didn’t know. But, rather, he is using a unique dialog format to clearly explain this fascinating revelation.

Verse 14 John says, “My lord, you know,”²⁰ which is a respectful reply confessing his ignorance as well as indicating his desire to have the correct answer to alleviate his bewilderment. “Lord, you know.” And then the elder said to him, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation.”²¹ Let me pause here. Literally in the Greek this can be translated, “These are those who came out of the tribulation,” comma, “the great one.” This is also described in chapter 11 verses two and three as a period limited to “42 months,” and it says “1260 days.” In fact, Jesus described this final three and a half years in Matthew 24:21 as the “Great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.”²²

Now, will you also please note the phrase here in verse 14, “the ones who come out.”²³ This is a very unique grammatical construction in Greek and it denotes an extended, prolonged process of coming out. It is literally expressing the idea that this particular throng of martyrs will continue to see their ranks grow over the remaining days of the great tribulation in the final three and a half years. And I might also add that this idea refutes the notion that this is referring to the rapture of the Church which, according to 1 Corinthians 15:52 will happen in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, not over a prolonged period of time.

¹⁹ Revelation 7:13.

²⁰ Revelation 7:14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Matthew 24:21.

²³ Revelation 7:14.

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In verse 14 we also read that they are described as those who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Here the symbolism is explained by the cleansing effect of the blood of the Lamb making, therefore, their robes emblematic of not only a victory celebration as we read about in verse nine, but here emblematic of the imputed righteousness of Christ that has cleansed them from all of their sins.

This idea of blood being a cleansing agent for sin may seem bizarre to many people, but it is clearly explained in the Old Testament. The blood sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament, under the Levitical system provided a temporary covering for sin. Those sacrifices, you will recall, needed to be repeated over and over and over again. But they could never finally, once and for all, remove a person’s sin. They could never totally cleanse or forgive them of their sins. In fact, in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse four we read that, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”²⁴ But all of those sacrifices pointed to the final sacrifice, the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God that would once and for all cleanse people of their sins. This is the cleansing that is in view in here, the cleansing of the blood of the Lamb.

We see this reference, as well, in Revelation one verse five where we read, “To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.”²⁵ I was struck by John MacArthur’s comments on this passage, and I quote, “The blood of Christ is exceedingly precious in the sight of the Lord and is the only cleansing agent for sin. The blood of the Lamb is the assurance of cleansing and forgiveness for those who have been martyred for their faith in Christ. Even their own sacrificial death could not atone for their sins, they, like all others, must rest alone in that sacrifice which Christ provided for them. What is true for them is true for the saints of all ages. Only the blood of Christ avails to wash away sin,” end quote.

The elder now continues his explanation to John in verse 15. He says, “For this reason they are before the throne of God.”²⁶ Dear friends, please hear this. There is no other basis by which we can ever stand before the throne of God. There is no other basis by which we can stand in the presence of his holiness. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from the filthy corruption of sin and allow us to stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy.

In verse 15 he goes on to say, “For this reason...”²⁷ In other words, because of Christ they are before the throne of God and they serve him day and night in his temple.

This is such a precious thing. Think of it. Now that they are fitted with the garments of the imputed righteousness of Christ, these martyred saints continually serve the God of glory, the God of grace. They do so, it says, “Day and night in His temple.”²⁸ This is

²⁴ Hebrews 10:4.

²⁵ Revelation 1:5.

²⁶ Revelation 7:15.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

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reference the holy realm of our God that is currently set apart from the contamination of sin that remains in this fallen universe. All of heaven is his temple. However, remember, there will be another temple on earth. We read about it in great detail in Ezekiel chapter 40 through 48. We read about the earthly millennial temple that the Lord will build during his millennial reign. And think of it. Once all of the final judgments are complete and sin has been forever eradicated in the new heavens and the new earth, at that time there will no longer be a need for a temple to house the presence of God for the entire universe will be his temple. His glory and his holiness will fill all of the universe. It is for this reason that later on when John sees the end of all of these things he says in Revelation 21:22, “And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.”²⁹

You see, when we enter into heaven, we will enter into the infinite presence of God who is the temple and this ineffable concept is described in the very next phrase in chapter 15. “And He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them.”³⁰ Here, beloved, we have a picture of security, a picture of shelter, a picture of being in the presence of a holy and glorious God where these saints now are basking in the brilliant light of his shekinah. We read about this all through Scripture. I remember David spoke of this intimate fellowship at the close of the 23rd Psalm where he said, “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

All of this, of course, was pictured in the Old Testament tabernacle as well as later on in the temple. God repeatedly promised that his presence would guarantee the fulfillment of all of his covenantal promises to his people. And his presence was often manifested when he revealed himself in this ineffable, brilliant, dazzling light of his shekinah which refers to the presence of his glory. The presence of God was housed in the holy of holies in the tabernacle and, again, later in the temple. In fact, the Hebrew term for tabernacle is *mishkan* (mish-kawn’) and it is derived from the root word *shakan* (shaw-kan’) which means to dwell or to abide or to rest. And from *shakan* (shaw-kan’) came the term “shekinah” denoting the glorious presence of God. And, again, throughout the Old Testament the mysterious light of his shekinah presence would be housed in the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple.

And you will recall that in the holy of holies there rested the Ark of the Covenant that held the violated tablets of the Law within. And then above the Ark were the cherubim and that is where the shekinah would hover. But the presence of God had to be separated from the sinfulness of man symbolized with the violated tablets within the Ark by the Mercy Seat where the blood would be splattered. And ultimately, now, the mercy has been obtained by the blood of Christ. Therefore, sinful man can come into the presence of a glorified God, of a holy God. That is the idea.

We also saw a picture of God’s presence in the incarnation of Christ. You will remember that when Jesus came to earth the shekinah of his presence was contained in a child, *Emmanuel, God with us*, Jesus Christ. And, of course, we saw a little glimpse of that

²⁹ Revelation 21:22.

³⁰ Revelation 7:15.

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glorious light when he peeled back his flesh on the Mount of Transfiguration and it shown forth in a terrifying scene. Indeed, John 1:14, we read, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”³¹

Now, beloved, with this background in the Old Testament we come to Revelation seven and verse 15 and we can understand that because of Christ, “He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over [us].”³² There we dwell in the presence of his glory. That is the scene before us where mercy and justice came together all because of Christ. And you will recall that when that happened, the veil of separation in the temple was torn asunder allowing us access into the throne room of God.

So for the martyred saints in this scene in Revelation seven who have endured so much on the earth, the shelter of the divine tabernacle would be a haven beyond description. In fact this is really the ultimate fulfillment of the words of the psalmist in Psalm 91 beginning in verse one where we read:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.³³

And, finally, the elder concludes explanation of what is revealed here to John with a sample description of some of the blessings these saints are now experiencing, blessings that were also found in Isaiah chapter 49 and verse 10. I might add that these are provisions that they are now enjoying of which they were sorely deprived when they were on the earth experiencing the horrors of the revelation. Notice what we see that they enjoy here in verse 16.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down 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.³⁴

The sheep who were prone to wander are now safely gathered together in the fold in the eternal fold, now enjoying the protection of the great Shepherd of the sheep. Oh, what a marvelous shepherd we have in the Lord, people. What a marvelous God, what a comfort to know what awaits us, and what incentive we have here to join in with what we see here in these martyred saints, to glorify our God and to worship him and to serve him until he calls us home.

³¹ John 1:14.

³² Revelation 7:15.

³³ Psalm 91:1-4.

³⁴ Revelation 7:16-17.

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My meditation upon this text caused me to, once again, get lost in the longing for heaven. Do you ever find yourself doing that and you begin to think about that and your mind just all of a sudden short circuits? It is like it is beyond what I have the ability to comprehend. And the best I can do is wrap the language of Scripture around what the Spirit of God speaks to me in my spirit with respect to the objective truth of the Word. And here we have a sample of that as we behold what occurs in the presence of God's glory.

Charles Spurgeon many years ago had such profound insight and encouragement with regard to this matter. Here is what he said, quote, "We cannot too often turn our thoughts heavenward, for this is one of the great cures for worldliness. The way to liberate our souls from the bonds that tie us to earth is to strengthen the cords that tie us to heaven. You will think less of this poor little globe when you think more of the world to come. This contemplation will also serve to console us for the loss, as we call it, of those who have gone before. It is their gain. And we will rejoice in it. We cannot have a richer source of consolation than this, that they who have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished. They have not lost life, but they have gained the fulness of it. They are rid of all that molests us here and they enjoy more than we, as yet, can imagine. Cheer your hearts, ye mourners, by looking up to the gate of pearl, by looking up to those who day without night surround the throne of their Redeemer," end quote.

Well, I hope you all long for heaven and never forget to rejoice in the God of grace who has purchased our redemption. And on this point I pray that you will all be able to join in with the words of the poet that penned this line, quote:

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,
Naked come to thee for dress,
Helpless look to thee for grace,
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these glorious truths. Cause us to understand them. Cause them to bear much fruit in our lives. Lord, I pray especially for those that know nothing of the gospel of grace, those who have never been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. Lord, would you convict them of their sin this day and cause them to run to the foot of the cross and plead for the mercy that you will so instantly give them. Lord, thank you for your love. Thank you for your Word. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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