

Sent: Wed, Dec 8, 2021 2:57 pm
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Revelation 7:9-17

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come!" (Matthew 24:14)

Remember last week's lesson on Revelation 7:1-8? Where we expected, based on our study of Revelation 6, to learn more about John's vision of the unleashing of God's judgment on the earth with the opening of the seventh seal as the final seal of the upcoming Tribulation period? Instead, we found a pause in the action, which Pastor Jesse Johnson described as, "silence, with everything perfectly still on the earth for a moment," as John sees "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth," ready to release the seventh seal, but holding back on its release at the command of another angel having, "the seal of the Living God." Held back, the angel said, until "they" (apparently more angels involved) had opportunity to place a seal on the foreheads of "the 144,000" (12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel) who, we learned, would be saved, sealed, and sent out to evangelize the whole world in midst of all the terror and turmoil going on around it! And so, we learned not only that God had (and has) not forgotten His people, Israel, but that He would fulfill all His promises, and the many prophecies of the Old Testament, to make them a "light to the nations" and that they would actually become the greatest missionary force the world had ever known, all during the worst of times, when it would be the most difficult time ever to become and "be" a Christian! And it also helped us better understand Jesus' words to His disciples (in the Olivet Discourse, in Matthew 24:14) in answer to their question about what the sign would be of His second coming and the "end of the age"! Where He said that "the gospel of kingdom would be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end would come!"

And that set the scene for last night's lesson on Revelation 7:9-17, where John writes: "After these things I looked, and behold (surprise!), 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 so, we see the scene shifting from John's vision of what's happening on earth (in Revelation 7:1-8) to a new vision of what's happening, at the same time, in heaven!

And so, who are these ones in heaven? They're obviously believers, as indicated by their "white robes" (the heavenly "dress code," as noted by Jesse), and they're celebrating their "salvation"! In fact, verse 14 says, "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"!

Does this "great multitude" include those "souls" cited in Revelation 6:9-11 (at the time of the fifth seal) who John saw "underneath the altar...who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained," and who were crying out for the Lord to "avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth"? (To which the Lord told them to "rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow brethren who were to be killed, even as they had, would be completed"!)

Seems clear that they were part of the "great multitude" (of martyrs, and other "new" believers) which was apparently growing rapidly! In fact, the word "come" in verse 14 actually means "keep coming"! (And, as MacArthur notes, makes this ongoing transformation clearly distinct from what will occur, instantly, at the "rapture"!)

In Revelation 7:9 they're all now "standing before the throne and before the Lamb," worshipping and praising the Lord (waving palm branches) for their salvation! Which quickly "elicited" a response from "all the angels" and from the twenty-four elders and the "four living creatures" in a crescendo of praise to God! "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen!" (A reminder of the worship and praise to the Lamb, in Revelation 5, after the opening of the scroll!)

It is interesting to see the response of the angels who "never knew" or can ever experience the salvation we as humans can experience but are apparently so fascinated by it! 1 Peter 1:12 says: "It was revealed to them (referring to the prophets of the Old Testament) that they were not serving themselves, but you, in the things (about the sufferings of Christ) which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

So how did those making up the "great multitude" gain the privilege of going to heaven and "standing before the throne"? Was it because of the "blood" that they (at least many of them) shed, as "martyrs for the cause"? No way! Revelation 7:14 makes it clear that it was because of the "blood of the Lamb"!

1 Peter 1:18-19 say, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers (or by wearing white robes, or because you shed blood as a martyr), but with the precious blood, as of a Lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ!"

Revelation 7:15-17 gives some wonderful glimpses into what heaven will be like for the "saints" of God! Including the idea that "the One sitting on the throne" would "spread His tabernacle over them," a reference back to Old Testament times when God would "dwell among His people," with His glory filling the tabernacle, providing protection and comfort for His people during their wilderness wandering! And the Lamb "being their Shepherd," and guiding them to the "springs of the water of life...and wiping every tear from their eyes"! Wow!

Ezekiel 37:27 says, "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever!"

The apostle Paul prayed (in Ephesians 1:18-19) that "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what the hope of His calling is, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what are the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe...!"

And so, as Jesse asked, what might inspire believers to choose to suffer persecutions, and even martyrdom (if that would be needed)? It's got to be faith in the future, the "hope of His calling, and "things to come"! Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen!" And, in verse 13 (speaking of the "heroes of that faith): "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance...!"

Revelation 7 takes us from the "worst of times" on earth, to the "best of times" in heaven! John, exiled on the Isle of Patmos, and nearing the end of his life on this earth, must have experienced great joy after seeing, in his vision, the things to come! As should we! Knowing that "in the end," the gospel will triumph!

As Pastor Michael Connor said in his closing remarks last night, "The good guys win!"

May God bless your week!

Lowell