



# **DECLARE HIS PRAISES**

## **Everyday, Everywhere, to Everyone**

### **Sermon—based on Revelation 7:9-17**

#### **Revelation 7:9-17**

**After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "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. 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 spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."**

Evangelism is the work our Lord Jesus has given us to do—to declare his praises: everywhere, every day, to everyone. Our purpose as his followers is to tell the good news of salvation that Jesus won by his death and resurrection from the dead. It is a privilege to serve our Lord by declaring his praises. Yet, we must often admit that it is hard work; our efforts are beset with challenges and obstacles that can be discouraging.

God has some encouragement for us today. He gives us a picture of what the result of all evangelism work will be. When we wonder if our efforts of telling people about Jesus and working to declare his praises are finally going to do any good, then ...

#### **Look at the End Result of Evangelism:**

- 1. People Standing Gloriously in the Presence of the Lamb**
- 2. People Dwelling Eternally under the Providence of God**

## **1. People Standing Gloriously in the Presence of the Lamb**

The apostle John was granted a vision of God's throne room in heaven. God was surrounded by the 24 elders representing the Church (all believers) of both the Old and New Testaments. The four living creatures (cherubim) were close to his throne. And there were angels—more than John could number. These angels joined in a triumphant song to the Lamb of God who had been slain: **Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!** They praised Jesus who was now exalted and rules the universe with all power and glory. Then John tells us: **I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.**

Before John stood a mass of people so large that they couldn't be counted. These were the spiritual children of Abraham, the fulfillment of God's promise to him that his descendants would be as the number of stars appearing in the night sky (Genesis 15:5). John saw the result of the proclamation of the gospel throughout history. He saw the total number of people of all time that God brought to faith and preserved in faith by the power of his Word. A breathtaking vision: people from everywhere, of every time and culture, of all languages and nations!

John tells us what happened next. **Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "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."**

John saw those who had come out of the great tribulation. That tribulation is the many hardships and suffering which Christians must go through in this life before leaving and going to heaven—"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The tribulation is all the suffering and trouble that we experience in this sinful world: illness, pain, stress, losses, persecution and on and on. But those in heaven, as John saw them, had come out of that tribulation. Their bliss is uninterrupted. Since there is no sin in heaven, there are no effects of sin. Sin and its curse make our lives difficult and miserable. It is difficult to imagine what life would be like without it. But in heaven God describes a life free of sin's consequences: **Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.** Those in heaven have no more discomforts or difficulties of any kind; they have everything they need for a perfect life.

Day by day the heavenly multitude is growing as believers die and God takes their souls to be with him. John isn't describing some sudden escape—a mass rapture of all Christians—which some claim Jesus will bring about just before the end of the world. Rather, as believers die, one by one they are released from all the tribulation of life on earth and immediately join the host of those heavenly saints who are given eternal rest from their labor.

**They were wearing white robes.** This describes their complete sinlessness—only those who are perfect will be in heaven. Realizing our sinfulness, how can we ever hope to be admitted? Even trying to be the best we can, the Bible tells us that in God’s assessment “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). The only way for us to be cleansed to the point of complete perfection is to be washed in the blood of Lamb. His pure, holy blood is powerful to dissolve the stains of our sin and completely remove them. Only the blood of the Lamb of God can make us stand before the throne of the holy God because “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). In Christ alone, we are holy and perfect and fit to live with God in heaven.

John saw the saints **holding palm branches in their hands**. Waving palm branches was an ancient sign of victory. Many years ago, Christians buried their dead with palm branches in their hands to testify that people who die in Christ are victorious. They enter glory, the reward of faith, and their bodies too will be raised on the last day and share in the glory of heaven. The Scriptures teach, **"When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

What a blessing for those who have gone before us into heaven! They are freed from this world of sin and suffering, and they now abide in glory where the longing of their spirits is satisfied. This is what we also desire and await patiently. And this is why we strive to share the gospel, so that many more will share this glorious heavenly scene with us. That’s why we work at evangelism and declare the praises of Jesus everywhere, everyday, with everyone. We want more people to stand gloriously with us in the presence of the Lamb—our glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

John’s vision points to another wonderful aspect of the end result of all evangelism efforts...

## **2. People Dwelling Eternally Under the Providence of God**

Children born into this world are dependent on the care of their parents and others who are there to attend to their needs. Little children could not survive without this help. Even when parents try their best to serve the needs of their children, they are not able to do it perfectly or consistently. It is different for everyone under the care of God in heaven.

As one of the heavenly elders continued telling John about all those believers standing in the throne room of God, he said, **“He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.”** The care that God gives his children in heaven is consistently perfect. God protects them; he lives right among them. And like a tent that covers them, he wards off anything that would harm them or cause them to fear.

God provides for them: **The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.** Jesus is their Good Shepherd who gives them the living water of salvation. Whatever other joys there are to experience in heaven, for Christians the greatest of all joys is to be with Jesus, and to declare his praises for rescuing us from the death of sin and giving the free gift of eternal life.

God comforts them: **And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.** Loving parents often wipe tears from the cheeks of their crying children, assuring them of their love and offering to help their hurting children. God, our heavenly Father, promises that he will remove our tears. In fact, he will completely take away the cause of tears—everything which makes us hurt now. Heaven is bliss. It is the total absence of evil and the complete fullness of good! People in heaven are under the perfect providence of their glorious God forever.

This is what God has promised for us and what we long for. It's hard to wait when we think about standing gloriously in the company of Jesus and living eternally under the providence of our loving God; we look forward to the time when we will be there. But our time here is for more than waiting; it is for working—doing the work that Jesus has given us. Just look at this heavenly scene which God describes for us in his word—many people in the glory and bliss of heaven. That will move us to work diligently and urgently.

(List examples of evangelism efforts in the congregation whereby the gospel is reaching people.)

We know that our work in the Lord is not in vain. He blesses the gospel to bring more people to faith so that finally, together with us, they will stand gloriously before the Lamb who was sacrificed to save them and dwell eternally under the providence of God who loves them. So we are determined to declare the praise of Jesus everywhere, everyday, to everyone!