

Ultimate Glory.

Text: Rev 7:9-17

1) What Does It Consist Of?

Suggested Hymns:

2) Who Shall Enjoy It?

210, 487, 212, 327, 496

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Revelation 7:9-17, *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."

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." (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The end of the church-year. The end of life. That is a depressing thought for those who have learned to love life more dearly, than they

love God. But for Christians the end of life is the end of sin, and the end of sorrow.

Ultimate Glory. What an encouraging truth for us Christians! It is like beautiful, sweet-smelling flowers in an otherwise barren room. Surely this is a most appropriate text for the end of the church-year, which reminds us of the end of all things. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Ultimate Glory

What Does It Consist Of?

We often speak of the glory of heaven. What do we mean by that? What is the Scriptural conception of heavenly glory? Scripture says in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 *that ... God ... calls you into His own kingdom and glory.* And in 2 Thessalonians 2:14 that God *called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* What is this glory?

Firstly, it is sinlessness and holiness. Our text begins, *’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.*

St. John saw a great multitude in heaven before the throne of God who were clothed in white robes. We need not understand from this that all the saints in heaven literally wear white robes. White robes are symbols of purity and holiness. That will be an essential part of the glory of heaven, as we read in Revelation 21:27, *’But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.*

We shall, like the angels, be confirmed in our bliss. It will no longer be possible to sin. There will be no temptations, and no desire to sin. There will be no corruption as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:53, *’For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. “We shall all be changed.”’¹* We learn in Matthew 13:43 that *“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!* For example Moses and Elijah, appearing in glory at the transfiguration of Jesus.²

With what labour and disappointment we strive to be holy here on earth! We fall short of the glory of God, which is holiness. Scripture commands us in Leviticus 19:2, *‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’* Jesus reiterated this in the New Testament as we read in Matthew 5:48, *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

How miserably we have failed! *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*³ *“An inheritance incorruptible.”*⁴ What glory is in store for us!

Secondly, there will be no more suffering. Our text says 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.”*

¹⁶ *“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore.* Food and drink are the necessities of life. How we work hard for them! How we worry and torment ourselves with the fear of lacking these things! We ought not, even here, because God has promised them. But in the weakness of our flesh these things trouble us.

In heaven there will be no more such fear. *“The Lamb ... shall feed them.”*⁵ He who is *“in the midst of the throne,”* has all power over all things.

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. We wipe away our tears here; but the tears come again, in new sorrow. God wipes them away once and for all. The tribulations of earth are brought on by sin. Our tears come again because we can not remove the cause — sin. When sin disappears, the consequences of sin vanish, too. Because everyone in heaven are sinless and holy, there can be no more tribulation. We read in Romans 8:18, ¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Thirdly, we shall be in the presence of the Lord. We read in verses 9 and 15 of our text. *Standing before the throne and before the Lamb,* and *“Therefore they are before the throne of God.*

God is omnipresent. It is difficult for us to understand that we shall be in the presence of God. But our text speaks of the ***“throne.”*** Heaven is God’s throne. Yes, we shall be in the presence of God in a manner beyond our comprehension.

We shall also be in the presence of the Lamb. What joy at the moment of meeting to see our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier! We shall stand before the God of glory. In this world man cannot endure the manifestation of such glory.

Neither Israel nor Moses could endure the glorious display of God’s power and majesty on Mount Sinai,⁶ which was like a devouring fire.⁷ Here even the reflected glory of God frightens people. Moses had to cover his face because Israel was afraid to come near to Him.⁸

Isaiah was filled with fear when he saw the vision of God’s glory and holiness. Being a sinful man, he cried: ***“Woe is me!”*** But in heaven we shall delight in the glory of God, and instead of exclaiming, ***“Woe is me!”*** we shall sing never-ending hallelujahs.

Fourthly, we shall be in the presence of the angels. Our text says, ***All the angels stood around the throne.*** This is not a symbol. Jesus said in Matthew 18:10,¹⁰ ***“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.*** Christians are happy in good company.

How blessed was Lot when the angels took him out of Sodom! How happy shall we be to leave this sinful Sodom, earth, and be with the angels eternally! No wonder we read that this great multitude praises God saying in our text ***with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*** and ***“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”*** We, too, shall praise God for giving us unworthy sinners a place in heaven.

People may sometimes ridicule us because of our hope of glory. They say: ***“What do you expect to do in heaven, play a harp? You don’t know how. Do you expect to rest forever? You’ll get tired of that soon enough. Do you think it will hurt any less to fall down on a street of gold than on a street of concrete? Will you eat and sleep there?”***

All of this reveals what crude, carnal ignorance blinds these people. It is idle speculation. God has revealed and pictured to us the glories of heaven and all that we need to know of it. Our text shows that heaven is more glorious than all the splendour of the earth.

The hymnist writes, ⁹

*There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Eternal day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain*

2. Ultimate Glory Who Shall Enjoy It?

Firstly, people of all nations, kindreds, and tongues shall enjoy it. Our text says, *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.* We may hear this phrase or something similar used today; but something is missing here.

As it is often used today, there is another phrase added. People speak today of all nations, all classes, and all creeds. However, Scripture never uses the term “all creeds.” The Bible knows only one creed.

St. John saw people of all nations, but not of all creeds, because people of all creeds were not there. It is folly to teach, as the Universalists do, that good will come at last to all people.

It will only come to all Christians, to all believers in Christ, no matter whether they were rich or poor, black or white, old or young, educated or illiterate. We read in John 10:27-29, ²⁷ *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.* ²⁸ *“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.* ²⁹ *“My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.*

And in Matthew 25:31-33 we read, ³¹ *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.* ³² *“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate*

them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ ***“And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.***

Secondly, Those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb shall enjoy it. Our text says, ***“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.”*** This shows which creed was believed by those who have entered the eternal mansions. It is the creed which confesses Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

They ***washed their robes.*** The robes were unclean and needed washing. This excludes the self-righteous, who think they are clean, sinless, and who do not admit that they need to be washed of sin. Only those people stand before the throne as knew that by nature they were unclean and confessed: *“We have done those things which we ought not have done, and we have neglected those things which we ought to have done.”* Do you want to share Christ’s glory? Are you conscious of your sin?

But they ***washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*** Jesus died for the sins of the world. When He shed His blood, sin was atoned for. When we receive Him as our substitute, believe that He died for us, we are washing our robes. If we wash our robes in the blood of Christ, they are perfectly white, we are cleansed of sin.

Some of them suffered great tribulation. Even though they were the children of God, they had to suffer. Suffering is no indication that we are no longer children of God. Scripture says in Hebrews 12:6, ***“For whom the LORD loves He chastens.”*** But suffering is not a proof that we are the heirs of heaven either. Faith in Christ is the one thing that makes us children of God. Tribulation only tries, strengthens, and purifies, that faith.

Those who washed their robes are of all nations, kindreds, and tongues; together they sing the praises of God. What glory when the bond which unites all believers shall become visible!

In this world we cannot see faith, and we are therefore unable to recognise the members of Christ’s body as they are found in the various denominations. But what glory — the end of all schisms in heaven, perfect union among all the perfected saints!

The glory is more apparent by contrast. In this world there is strife, hatred, bloodshed, and war among nations. Deceitful diplomacy among nations. But in heaven there is everlasting peace. Try to imagine it. What glory to join with all the redeemed, martyrs, prophets, saints of all ages, and angels to sing with united hearts the praises of God!

St. John saw all this in a vision of heaven. God who spoke to the prophets in the Old Testament period by visions, spoke to St. John in the same way. St. John did not imagine this.

It is the same truth as that revealed by Jesus Christ. Is there a heaven, a place of ultimate glory? Jesus said in John 14:2-3, ² ***“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.***

Is there a heaven? John says ***“I saw heaven opened.”***¹⁰ Have you seen it by faith? Have you seen its glory? Is it worth patiently waiting for? Will you remember it as your ultimate goal?

Remember the words of Revelation 3:11, ***Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.***

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,¹¹

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress,
Wherein before my God I’ll stand
When I shall reach the heav’nly land.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:51

² Luke 9:30

³ 2 Peter 3:13

⁴ 1 Peter 1:4

⁵ Ezekiel 34:23, Rev 7:7

⁶ Ex. 24:6; 33:22

⁷ Ex. 24:17

⁸ Ex. 34: 29-35

⁹ Isaac Watts

¹⁰ Revelation 19:11

¹¹ Hymn 327