

LIVE AT THE END:

GOSPEL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM REVELATION 7:13-17

(OR “ESCHATOLOGICAL, GOSPEL TRUTHS TO EMBRACE IF YOU WANT TO STAY FAITHFUL TO KING JESUS IN AN AGE OF MONSTER SECULAR STATES, SEDUCTIVE PAGANISM, RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, HEARTRENDING SUFFERING, UNAVOIDABLE MORTALITY, AND OTHER GREAT TRIBULATIONAL REALITIES”)

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

(REVELATION 7:13-14)

I. Live with the End in Mind

- A. Revelation 7:13-14 shows what we can expect when God’s kingdom is fully manifested at the end of this age.
- B. In Revelation, we see that God’s goal, the goal which he had from the beginning, has always been to have a people for himself, a people who would glorify him and enjoy him forever, because they have seen how good he is.
- C. I would like to revisit this passage and encourage us to live always with the end in mind—to let the end as *God* defines it, determine how we live today.
- D. Keep this question in mind:
“If we want to stand firm in the Lord, if we want to protect and nurture our love for the Lord in the face of all the ugliness, uncertainty, paganism, and evil which marks this period of great tribulation, what must we do?”

II. Apocalypse Now

- A. Revelation points us ultimately to the end of the ages to encourage believers to stay faithful to the Lord amidst persecution and temptation.
- B. Revelation 7 points us to the time when God’s kingdom will be completely established and manifested in this world.
 - 1. Now that we know that our future is with God and his Lamb, Jesus Christ, how should we live in this present time? What should our values be in this present time?
 - 1 John 3:2-3: “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”
- C. But the Scripture also teaches us that when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, eternal life comes into us.

1. Consider:
 - John 3:18: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”
 - John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”
 2. If all that is true, there is a sense in which you and I are already beginning to experience the reality described in Revelation 7:15.
- D. Revelation 7 is both about the future and the present. It teaches us:
- who we are
 - who God is
 - how we will live in the future
 - and how we should live in the present.

III. A Great Multitude (Rev 7:9-12)

- A. In Revelation 7, the apostle John is enabled to see the future.
- B. He sees the fulfilment of God’s plans for his people: “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (v 9).
- C. This is a vision of the triumphant Church, the great Household of God (Eph 2:19-22), when it is fully formed.
- D. The Church is catholic because it represents the full scope of human ethnicity and diversity. When we take the Church as a whole, we will find every language, every dialect, every accent, every personality-type represented.
- E. What unites the Church? “...standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,” (v 9)
- F. The anthem of the Church: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (v 10).
 1. The Church is the human society that has placed its hope in God and his Lamb, Jesus Christ.
 2. The Church is the community that looks to God and Christ alone for their salvation, putting no faith in earthly pleasures or powers.
- G. As the angels of heaven see all that is happening, they fall on their faces “before the throne and worshiped God,¹² saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen’” (vv 11-12).

IV. Victorious, Blood-Soaked Ones (Rev 7:13)

- A. A heavenly elder asks: “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” (v 13)
- B. John invites the elder to answer his own question—and teach him: “Sir, you know.”
- C. *They are victorious survivors from the great tribulation.* At which point the elder says: “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.”
1. “Tribulation” (Gk: *thlipsis*) = “affliction,” “tribulation,” “distress,” “oppression.”
 2. From Revelation 6, the great tribulation is a time that is marked by...
 - war (6:2-4)
 - famine (6:5-6)
 - death (6:7-8)
 - the persecution of the Church (6:9-11)
 - a climactic dissolution of the present order (6:12-17).
 3. The great tribulation is likely this present evil age. The present age is a season of great oppression, suffering, evil, perversion, moral degeneration, idolatrous worship, etc..
 4. These people whom John sees are survivors and victors of this great tribulation. They are the ones who have kept their trust in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have persevered and finished their race.
- D. *They are those washed in the blood of the Lamb.*
1. “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
 2. White symbolizes purity, innocence, and righteousness.
 3. These people got their robes white by washing them in the blood of the Lamb. (Which implies that their robes were not white to begin with.)
 4. The blood of the Lamb is the atoning sacrifice that was performed by the Lord Jesus Christ for you and me who believe.
 5. As Jesus hanged on the cross, God was gathering up all the sins and evils of our lives—all our dishonest deeds, all our angry and abusive words, all our shameful and hateful desires—and he was placing them on the body of Jesus. He was destroying all of them in the body of Jesus. He was paying for those sins in the perfect and infinite person of Jesus.

V. Blood, Propitiation, and Ransom

- A. Scripture uses two terms to describe what Jesus was doing as he hanged on the cross.
- B. “Propitiation” (Gk: *hilastērion, hilasmos*) (= means of appeasement, satisfaction).
1. Scripture:
 - Romans 3:25: “whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”
 - 1 John 4:10: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
 2. As Jesus hanged on the cross, he was a propitiating sacrifice. He died to satisfy/appease/placate God's own demand for justice.
- C. “Ransom” (Gk: *lutron, antilutron*) (= price paid to gain/recover something/someone)
1. Scripture:
 - Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
 - 1 Timothy 2:5-6: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”
 2. As Jesus hanged on the cross, he was a ransoming sacrifice. He died to buy back, to purchase, people who were enslaved to the power of evil, to the power of their own sins.
- D. This is why the blood of the Lamb washes us white as snow. It is because the blood of Christ Jesus...
1. fully satisfies and appeases God's justice.
 2. purchases people for God, liberating them from judgment and sin.
- E. The Lamb's blood can achieve all these things because it is the holy life-blood of God's very own Son—the Son who came from his very own person, the Son who fulfilled all righteousness on our behalf.

VI. Good News for Those Who “CMI”

- A. Christianity brings good news for people who “cannot make it” (cf. Rom 3:9-10).

- B. The heart of the Christian Faith, indeed, the heart of God's plan, is the blood of the Lamb, the crucified Jesus Christ our Lord who died for sinners.
- C. If we believe in Jesus—if we acknowledge that salvation is only found in him and trust his blood to save us—we will be saved. Our robes will be washed in the blood of the Lamb and all our sins will be forgiven and put away by God himself.

VI. Washed by His Blood

If we want to stand firm in the Lord, if we want to protect and nurture our love for the Lord in the face of all the ugliness, suffering, oppression, evil, and pagan seduction that marks this period of great tribulation, we need to recognize that God has already freed us from our sins by the blood of his all-sufficient sacrificial Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rev 1:5-6, 5:9-10). There is no need to find peace in anything else. Our peace with God is through the blood of Christ alone. Christ Jesus the Lamb of God is the fully-sufficient and solely-effective satisfaction and payment for all our sins. Receive this blood. Trust in this blood for all your life!

Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything that you disagree with or found difficult to accept?
3. In what sense are the future blessings featured in Revelation already enjoyed by believers today?
4. What is the answer to the question: "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" (v 13) How does the elder describe them?
5. What do the words "propitiation" (Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 4:10) and "ransom" (Mk 10:45; 1 Tim 2:5-6) teach us about what Jesus was doing as he hanged, bruised and bloody, on the cross?
6. Why is the death of Jesus good news for those who "cannot make it"?
7. Based on Rev 7:13-14, what must we do if we want to stand firm in the Lord?