

# WHERE WE LOOK IN TIMES OF TROUBLE Sunday School- May 15, 2011

## Unifying Topic: THANKFUL WORSHIP

### Lesson Text

I. **The Great Multitude** (Revelation 7:9-12)

II. **From Tribulation To Triumph** (Revelation 7:13-17)

**The Main Thought:** And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:10 KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** In times of trouble, people may tend to focus on their problems. Where can we look to find inspiration to focus on God in times of trouble? John depicted a large group of excited worshipers who had come through a difficult ordeal.

**Lesson Aim:** To teach students about the eternal victory they have in Christ.

**Life Aim:** To emphasize to your students that God will bring about a great reversal when Christ returns: those who have experienced opposition and persecution for their faith will be victorious.

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7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

7:17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

### **HISTORY:**

At the end of **Chapter 6**, "*For the great day of his wrath is come:*" the question is asked, "*Who is able to stand?*" **Chapter 7** then answers the question in some detail; showing not simply who can stand, but how. Jesus Christ is holding the great book of God in His hands, the Book of Destiny, the book that tells what is to happen at the end of the world. The book is so important and so secretive that God has it bound with seven seals until it is time for it to be opened. Remember: the events have not yet happened upon earth. They are things that are to happen in the end time. But God has given us a glimpse into the things. Why? - To warn us to turn to His Son. Christ alone can save us from the judgment to come. Chapter 6 shows where Jesus Christ has just broken open six of the seals. When He broke them open, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse were seen storming across the face of the earth with their terror and devastation. We have seen how the four horsemen represent the wars and killing, famine and pestilence, hunger and starvation, death and hell that the antichrist will unleash upon the earth. We have seen how evil will mass together every force of demonic power it can in order to make a final assault upon the earth. And we have seen that the destructive catastrophic devastation of evil unleashed upon the earth. But to our horror, this is not all. God's great book declares this is just the beginning of sorrows and woes. But this terrible devastation, as horrible as it is, is nothing compared to what is yet to come. When all the judgments have fallen, the earth and the world shall be utterly destroyed. How it is to happen will be seen when the seventh seal is broken open. When the seventh seal is broken, the seven seal judgments are over; the period of history that will be known as the beginning of sorrows and woes will be finished. Both the great tribulation itself will be launched by the seventh seal.

- The great tribulation that will witness the shattering blast of seven trumpets of judgment.
- The great tribulation that will witness the wrath of seven bowls of judgment poured out upon the earth.

Now back to that question: "*Will anyone be saved through such terrible days?*" "*Can anyone survive such terrible happenings?*" As scripture itself has just asked: "*The great day of God's wrath is come...who shall be able to stand?*" Yes! There is to be a remnant of Israel saved—144,000 Jews shall be saved.

### ***Comparison Between to the Two Groups Described in Revelation 7***

- The winds of judgment are in the hands of God and His angels, not in the hands of evil (v1-2). The four angels are standing on four corners of the earth, "holding back" the four winds. Another angel arrives on the scene carrying the seal of the living God.
- God will give the most wonderful command: to delay the judgments until God's people can be sealed (v2-3). This shows that this angel comes with the power and authority of God Almighty. His job is to "seal" the bond-servants of God. They are called "bond servants" or "servants" (KJV) because throughout the Tribulation they will be serving the Lord as the great evangelists. The seal is stated to be on their foreheads and will probably include special impartation of the Holy Spirit for their specific service for God. God will not destroy this world, or let it be destroyed, until every soul who is searching for Him comes to obedience, or until all the "bond-servants of God" are sealed.
- God will give the wonderful counsel to seal 144,000 Jews from all the tribes of Israel (v4-8). This means they are the first converts after the Tribulation begins. It was their personal redemption. These became the servants of God and God's people. The sealing guaranteed their physical and spiritual protection. It may also point to their protection from the apostasy and deceptions of the beast. We must remind ourselves that Revelation uses numbers in a figurative way to symbolically describe something without consideration of the numerical value. In verses 5 through 8 there is a listing of the 12 tribes of Israel, and twelve thousand are sealed from each tribe. The first thing we notice about this list is that it is not the literal 12 tribes of Israel we have recorded in our Old Testaments. The tribe of Joseph is mentioned. There was no tribe of Joseph. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted and Levi is added. If these are to be understood as the literal tribes of Israel that we must conclude that no one is saved from the tribes of Dan and Ephraim and those in the tribes of Joseph and Manasses would be included twice.

#### **LESSON:**

### **Revelation 7:9-12 The Great Multitude**

**7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number:** After the above vision concerning verses 1-8: the sealing and salvation of the 144,000 Jews, John looked and saw another awesome sight—an innumerable multitude. The great multitude is innumerable, whereas the witnesses from Israel were exactly numbered. <sup>1</sup>Here is a second group who will survive the time of God's wrath. They have successfully applied the teaching of Jesus: *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matt. 10:28). This multitude pertains to martyrs who gave their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great Tribulation. This innumerable company of believers indicates an innumerable company of people who come to faith in Christ during the time of the end.

**7:9b of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb,** Evidently, by this time, the gospel message has indeed been preached *"in all the world, as a witness to all nations"* so that shortly *"the end will come."* If the scene shown John includes future saints which have yet to die in the judgments or persecution about to come, then they will have heard the preaching of the divinely commissioned angel *"having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people"* Rev. 14:6. The emphasis is on **"all"** meaning not excluding any nation, kindred/tribe, people, tongue; both of OT and NT indicate that multitudes of non-Jews will join with the believing Jewish remnant in seeking the Lamb. This will be an innumerable number beyond human computation.

**7:9c ...clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands:** Like the martyrs of the fifth seal (Rev.6:9-11), they will be **clothed in white** which **is a symbol of purity and holiness**. This means they have been made pure and free from all the blemishes of sin and from all the corruption of the world—all by the righteousness of Jesus Christ; they have been perfected and stand before God perfected. The use of **palm branches** according to ancient traditions **symbolized festive celebration, joy, and worship** as well as **deliverance, victory, and triumph**. Here, with palm branches in their hands, they are the redeemed before God, celebrating their triumph over the terrible Tribulation and the sin, evil, death, and corruption of the world; they are filled with joy to be the blood bought multitude in the presence of the Lamb.

**7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb:** They have much to be joyful about! These, praise Jesus the Lamb intensely as the people praised the Jesus the King

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\\_of\\_Revelation/commentary/htm/030709.htm#3.7.9](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/030709.htm#3.7.9)  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

at His first appearance into Jerusalem—"Salvation belongs to the Son of David!" They praise God...

- because God has saved and delivered them through the great trials upon earth.
- because God has given them the power to believe and to endure to the end.
- because God has accepted them.
- because God has completed their salvation; perfected them forever and ever with His glory.

To much is given, will cry the loudest! "Cry out" is the Greek word *krazw*, meaning "to cry aloud," but here it is a cry of joy and loud jubilation over their salvation—"Salvation To Our God!" They shout and praise God and Christ as One! This should be the constant praise offered by God's people today. But some people don't think it takes all of that. But do you see the magnitude up in heaven before the throne of God. There is no saying 'I'm tired'; 'I don't feel like it'; 'I praise Him my way!' No! No! No! Can you imagine a great multitude standing before the throne of God, clothed in white robes, holding palm branches, and shouting praises for their salvation in honor and adoration unto God? We always sing that song "I want to be in that number!" Well this is the number to be in and you see what it will take to be in that number! Stay with me, it's getting better!

**7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God:** this is a picture of wave after wave of different beings standing in circles before the throne of God.

- The outer circle are the angels. Note, they surround or encircle the throne.
- Next come the twenty four elders.
- Then there are the four living creatures who stand at the four corners of the throne.
- Finally, there is the number of multitude of believers who stand face to face with the throne of God and the Lamb.

The numberless multitude has just sung their praises to God for His great salvation. When they do, the rest of the heavenly beings fall down before the throne on their faces and worship God. <sup>2</sup>Angels are always seen in attendance to God, obeying His will, or in the worship of God's Person and work as in creation (Job 38:1-7), or as in man's salvation (Luke 2:13-14). More particularly, the angels rejoice over the salvation of sinners (Luke 15:8-10).

**7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.**

1. They praise God for His **blessing**. Every good and perfect gift comes from God. These heavenly beings acknowledge this fact and bless God's name for it.
2. They praise God for His **glory**. God is glorious. It is the light of His glory that will provide the light of heaven. God is to be praised for the perfection of His glory as well as for His own glory.
3. They praise God for His **wisdom**. God is the Supreme and Majestic Intelligence of the universe. He is Omniscient, possessing all intelligence and perfect intelligence. It is God who planned creation and all the worlds and creatures of all dimensions whoever they are. It is God who planned Salvation and redemption through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God who has the knowledge to work all things out for good. He is to be praised for His wisdom.
4. They offer **thanksgiving** to God. They thank Him for creation, life, salvation, redemption, and for everything else. Again, they know that every good and perfect gift came from God.
5. They praise God for His **honour**. God is the Supreme and Majestic Being of the universe. There is none like Him. In addition, God is faithful and true. He never fails to keep His Word and promises nor to do what is best. He is the perfection of honor and truth and trustworthiness. Therefore, God's honor is praised.
6. They praise God for His **power**. God is the Supreme and Majestic Force of the universe. He is the Force that created the universe and that sustains and holds it together and that is moving it toward its destined end. In addition, God is the Supreme Force that works out the salvation and redemption of man and works out all things for good to those who love Him. He is the Supreme Power who oversees our lives from evil, death, and corruption. Therefore, God is praised for His power.
7. They praise God for His **might** and strength. God is strong. He never tires or becomes weary. There is no weakness in Him whatsoever. God is so strong that He is always able to help any of His creatures at anytime; anyone can approach God anytime for strength and receive His help. God never fails; He possesses perfect strength and shall possess it forever and ever. Therefore, God's strength is praised.

This blessing is a sevenfold blessing indicating completeness: "*blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power,*

<sup>2</sup> <http://bible.org/seriespage/redeemed-tribulation-rev-71-17>

*might.*" And there is an "Amen" to begin and an "Amen" to end it. As these other created beings hear the worship the great multitude brings to God, they see more clearly the power and wisdom and majesty of God. They can worship God all the more by seeing the salvation He brought to the great multitude.

## **Revelation 7:13-17 From Tribulation To Triumph**

**7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?** The words, "*and one of the elders answered,*" indicates that John had been puzzled over the identity of this group, and God, who knows our thoughts, answers John's question. The answer comes first through a question followed by more particulars about the multitude. The numberless multitude has not yet been identified. Now they are as the elder asks the question of John. John is so stunned and amazed by the sight and praise of the heavenly scene, he probably wanted to know the answer and it was important that John knew the identity of this great multitude.

**7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me:** John does not know but the elder does. He was only arousing John out of his stunned state of mind. (I've already given the answer in verse 9, but here's a short version in case you missed it) **7:14b These are they which came out of great tribulation:** "*The Great Tribulation*" is yet in the future. It points to a definite prophetic period, and not simply to tribulation in general in which all saints shared. "*The Great Tribulation*" cannot be the general troubles that affect God's people no matter the age. This would point to and mean that the antichrist has killed them. He has launched an all out attack against Christ, attempting to wipe the believer from off the face of the earth. And that means the antichrist wants the believer to deny Christ or else be put to death. All those who are true believers will refuse the antichrist and acknowledge Jesus Christ because they love the Lord with all their heart and they have the glorious hope of living with Christ forever and ever, worshipping and serving Him in perfection throughout all of eternity.

**7:14c ...and have washed their robes:** These saints were not believers from the church age. You've got to remember they came out of the "*Great Tribulation*" period. These are the martyrs killed in the last three and one half years of the Tribulation. We all die and end up in the grave. How then did these martyrs—the believers of the numberless multitude get white robes? What happens is this: when we believe in Jesus Christ, God takes our faith and counts it as the sacrifice of Christ. This means that we are free from sin. We stand sinless before God, acceptable to Him—all because Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, removed our sins from us. We are cleansed from sin by the sacrifice of Christ. We are made perfectly righteous by the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who has taken away our sin and clothed us in the white robes of righteousness before God. What a paradox: white robes made white by blood.

**...and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:** When Jesus, the Lamb shed His blood, it made it possible that the person would have no spot of sin, evil, or corruption in him. They would be clean and pure from all defilement and sin and imperfection. White stands for purity and perfection. We often sing the hymn: What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. It is truly the blood of Jesus, and nothing else. I'm so glad He went to the cross for us. Therefore, that's how the church should be—"that He might present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" Eph.5:27—be washed in His blood by trusting what He has done on the cross to cover all our sin.

<sup>3</sup>This symbolism is parallel to the likeness of Moses delivering the children of Israel from physical bondage. As Moses, who is the likeness of Christ delivered physical Israel from bondage in Egypt, Christ delivers mankind from the spiritual bondage of sin. Moses led his people across the Red Sea, and Christ leads mankind out of the bondage of sin through the red sea of His blood.

**7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple:** Where are these redeemed standing? Now observe closely: they are in heaven, not on earth, before the throne. There is still a function for the numberless multitude. They serve God continually, day and night. Because of the blood of Christ we have access to the throne of God. Under the old Law, the people of Israel did not have this privilege, it was necessary for them to go through the High Priest to have access to God. Since these verses are often applied to heaven it is difficult to get people to understand that we are dealing with figurative language which applies in a symbolic way to God's relationship to His people today. These things will certainly be true of Heaven, our eternal home, but they have application in a spiritual way today in the church.

**7:15b ...and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.** "*Dwell*" means "*to literally live or camp in a*

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scripturessay.com/article.php?cat=books&id=677&pagenumber=12>

*tent.*" Used by John of Jesus' incarnation: "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" *Jh. 1:14*. We will have the living presence of God with us forever. The presence of God will actually be manifested to the believer unceasingly. The multitude's enduring faith in the midst of the Great Tribulation provides a great testimony to the power of God and results in His dwelling among them. God spreads his tent over these martyrs to protect them with His presence. God's presence protects these saints perpetually. They no longer need to fear any trouble. They realize the ultimate goal of the eternal state: "*And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great Voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God*" *Rev.21:2-3*. God will be dwelling, living, moving, and having His being in the believer in an unbroken communion and fellowship.

**7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more:** They will have all their physical needs met. "*Hunger and thirst*" stand for all the physical necessities of life that they lacked when upon earth. Many will suffer terribly.

- They will be placed in extermination camps by the antichrist and his government.
- They will be starved to death. Some will be forced to flee their homes and belongings (Mk.13:15-16).
- They will starve to death while trying to scratch food out of the forests.
  - <sup>4</sup>The people in white robes were martyrs who suffered hunger, thirst and exposure. In the Tribulation, believers will go without food because of a mark offered them by world religion. If they have this mark, they can buy food. Many will starve to death because they do not accept the mark.

Such scenes as above are often seen on television. But in heaven, the believer will have all their needs met. Christians need not hunger or thirst physically nor spiritually because Christ is our source. We can be filled; have refuge and protection from the storm. Faithfulness is the key and knowing who we belong to. John was "*in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*." He had not wavered but increased spiritually having the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ before him in a vision. After such a vision, you can't help but know where to look in times of trouble and you'll begin to worship as in the heavenly scene.

**7:16b neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat:** They will be protected. This is the symbol of the sun and heat. This is a perfect environment!

**7:17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes:** Not only did the Lamb save them but He as the Shepherd will feed, lead, and God wipes away tears. All things causing sorrow will be forever gone.

#### **SUMMARY:**

<sup>5</sup>The second vision reveals a large innumerable multitude of all nations standing before the throne and the Lamb. Clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands, they cry out "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" They are joined in their praise by angels, the elders, and four living creatures. John is then told by one of the elders that those arrayed in white robes have come out of the great tribulation, with their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Before the throne of God, they serve Him day and night in His temple. Future blessings are then described: God will dwell among them; they shall be free from hunger, thirst, and the heat of the sun. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to fountains of living waters, and God will wipe all tears from their eyes. You've got to remember there is a victory coming and is already come!

#### **APPLICATION:**

The emphasis is on the One sitting on the Throne. Praise and Worship unto Him will always lead you through that time of trouble. This battle you win, when you "*don't deny Christ!*"

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<sup>4</sup> <http://versebyversecommentary.com/1998/12/14/revelation-713-17/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://executableoutlines.com/rev/rev\\_07.htm](http://executableoutlines.com/rev/rev_07.htm)

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>