

The Lamb in the midst of the Throne

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I. Macleod

[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the chapter we read in Revelation, chapter 7. And I want us tonight to look at this quite a long section really from verse 9 to verse 17, but just very briefly a kind of an overview of these verses.

But it begins there in verse 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 and so on.

Now, heaven always intrigues us, and so it should, because if you are here tonight as a believer, then you know that that is a place where you are going to spend the rest of your life forever and ever and ever and ever.

If you are going to go to, say, Canada or Australia or South Africa or somewhere in, say, another two or three years, you are going to live there. It would be, I think it would go without question, that you would be buying brochures and books about that place.

You would be glued to any program on television that came about telling you about it. You would want to know as much as you could about that place. It would become really interesting to you.

[1 : 21] It would absorb a lot of your thinking. And surely it should be the same for the Christian, that we should be forever thinking about the place that we are going to live forever and ever and ever and ever.

What is it going to be like? What is it going to involve? What will happen to us there? Now, in one sense, it's impossible for us to be even to begin to contemplate the glory and the splendor and the wonder of being in the immediate presence of Christ, where we will be like him.

Not only see him face to face, but be like him. But here in this, we are told some things about what it will be like when we are in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want us tonight just to think through some of these things briefly. Not going into it in any great depth. I'm missing out, obviously, quite large sections because there's so much there.

But just to, as it were, to have a little time of reflection upon where we're going. And I think the very first thing that we see here in verse 9 is that the redeemed of glory are going to be an innumerable number.

[2 : 32] We're told that, After this I beheld a great multitude which no man could number. Now, I think that's one of the most encouraging things because so often the Christian feels down at heart.

And so often we look around and we say, Ah, Christianity is not what it was. The church is not what it was. We so often feel that the church is losing out. Well, we've got to see the bigger picture.

We've got to see the wider picture. And here we have it. Here is a complete picture. That there's going to be in heaven such a number that no man can number. There is going to be just an incredible, an innumerable number of people.

And what an encouragement for us to go out with the gospel. There are many men and women, boys and girls in Scotland today, that I'm persuaded of the Lord, as he remarked, to bring into his kingdom.

And it is through people like you and me that he reaches them with the gospel. He's going to engather his own people. We are the ones that have been entrusted in bringing the message.

[3 : 40] A number that no man can number. Now there's a lot of speculation goes on as to whether there will be more that will be saved or more that will be lost. A lot of people have all these kind of arguments.

Will there be more saved than there will be lost? Now, we can waste our time in going into all these speculations. And in fact, there was a man came up to Jesus and really he kind of asked that question once.

And he said to the Lord, Lord, he said, are there few that be saved? In a sense, you're kind of asking that sort of question. And remember what Jesus said. He looked back at that man and he said to him, strive to enter in at the straight gate.

In other words, what Jesus really is saying is you make sure that you are in Christ. You make sure, Jesus is saying, that you are in me and that you are going to this eternal city.

These are great and weighty matters that in the end of the day, they belong to God. The one thing that we're told is that there's going to be an innumerable number that are going to be saved.

[4 : 47] The important thing for you and for me is to make sure that we are saved, that we are in Christ. And if we are in Christ, then when we get the glory, we will see this incredible number.

And I believe that there will be many, many wonderful surprises. A great multitude out of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb.

And I think one of the things that strikes you here is that all these people, that they're all doing the same thing. They're standing before the throne and before the Lamb and they're wearing the same thing.

They're clothed with white robes. And I think this gives us a sense of the unity and the oneness of glory. That there aren't going to be those who are great superiors and those who are inferior.

There aren't going to be those who are lording it over others. Everybody is going to be absolutely filling to their spiritual capacity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 51] It's been a great goal in this world to create a society where everybody is equal. It's never happened. We know only too well that it's always the same that, as has been said, some are more equal than others.

That's the way it'll be. But here it is in glory where there is this this oneness of purpose, oneness of service. And it tells us that they're all in white robes.

Now these are the robes that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. They are robes that are absolutely spotless with the purity and the perfection of Jesus himself.

Whiter than the snow. I haven't seen anything whiter than snow. You know, you get these adverts that say wash is whiter than white. And you can get white sheets or white pillow slips or white whatever and you can wash them two, three, four, five, ten times in that.

These washing powders that wash whiter than white. You can hang them out. But if you hang them out and there's a blanket of fresh snow below it that will look decidedly dull and grey. The purity of the snow that is white.

[6 : 58] And that's the kind of the picture that we have in the Bible. Remember how David himself was praying that the Lord would wash him that he might be whiter than the snow.

So here is the moral and spiritual purity of the saints in glory. With all the spotless perfection of Christ himself. all sin washed away.

There's not a hint of it. Not a trace of it. In any form or in any degree whatever. All sin removed and eradicated. Tonight you and I just cannot imagine that.

It's impossible for us as sinners to begin to contemplate a state where we are void of sin. Because even our best thoughts our holiest thoughts are still stained and marred by sin.

But here is his world and there won't be a place not even the slightest hint of sin. And as we know that the only way that people can receive this and people can experience this blessing is in the washing by the blood of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 09] And it tells us that they have palms in their hands. Now that is often an expression that is given a victory. Often there was the palm branch which often we have that idea of victory.

But there could be I'm not saying that that's what it is but there could be another idea or another way of looking at it. Particularly the Jew would think of that. Because as you remember in the Jews in the Old Testament they had their various feasts like the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles.

And you remember that the Feast of Tabernacles came at the end of the harvest. When all the labour was over all the toil was done the corn was in and the wheat was in they had gathered the crops in and the work was over.

It was a time of celebration and rejoicing the harvest was all there. And remember how they went to live in little booths. And these little booths were made from willow branches and palm branches.

And you'll be seeing them carrying these palms in their hands as they made these booths that they were going to live in. It was a time of great rejoicing. And maybe there's something of that that we have here.

[9 : 23] Because you see the harvest is complete. All the toil and all the labour is over. All the sowing all the planting. You and I know that that sowing is done with tears.

Psalms 126 tells us that. We sow in tears. Reaping in joy. Well you see here's the great harvest. These people that you've prayed and prayed and prayed for.

And sometimes you think what's been the point of it all? I was speaking to a man not that very long ago and he was talking about a minister who had been in this particular congregation that he is still in.

And I don't know if that minister was here for about 15 years or whatever and he said in that time he said not one person ever appeared to be converted or professed faith.

And yet he said he was hardly gone when one after another he said that's when I was converted. And one after another after another after another in the vacancy came to know the Lord and he said we could look back each one of us and we could see that the work was begun through this man's ministry.

[10 : 38] It was a sowing ministry a planting ministry and that's how sometimes it is one will plant another will water and it's God who gives the increase some will come along and they will begin to see the harvest some won't.

But you see sometimes people can become very discouraged by what they're doing and they're saying I'm not seeing anything. But you see in glory you'll see it all. It's all there. The toil is over.

The labors are over. There's this great and wonderful harvest. And the amazing thing is and you will not take any glory yourself in it. There won't be an ounce of pride in it.

But you'll be able to see how God actually used you times that you thought nothing was happening and yet God blessed these particular times. You'll see the answer to prayer.

You'll see the fruit of your tears. And there you will see the wonderful where the tapestry of God's purpose is unfolding and you will praise him. And then we see of course at the very heartbeat of it all and he cried with an out voice saying salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the land and all the angels stood round about the throne and about the elders and the four beasts and fell before the throne and their faces and worshiped God saying Amen blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be unto our God forever and ever.

[12 : 01] As we were just saying yesterday Christ is going to be central to everything like remember the doctor and his dog that's how it's going to be. Remember how the dog didn't know anything else about what was in the room but he knew this one thing that his master was in there and that's how it's going to be for the Christian.

Christ is going to be central to everything but we'll move on. Verse 13 a question is asked and it says one of the elders answered saying unto me what are these which are arrayed in white robes or who are these that are arrayed in white robes who are they?

Now again it might be just a very tiny thing but you'll notice that earlier on there has been a minute account given to us of all the tribes their distinctiveness it's given and then having given all the tribes the question is now asked and who are these?

And I think that one of the things that is being highlighted here is that we will know the distinctiveness of each not only group but of each person.

I'm firmly I'm firmly persuaded that this is one of the many things which are indicating to us of this awareness this knowledge of one another in glory.

[13 : 25] Question is often asked will we know one another in heaven and I don't think it's even a I don't even think that it's a point that needs to be disputed because if we know one another here surely when we are in a world of perfection where we will where we will be known even as we are known surely we will know one another there.

The very basis of of friendships is built upon our own distinctiveness our own individuality. every soul is different every single one and our own individuality and distinctiveness does not cease it continues who we are all that we are will continue forever and ever and ever and I find it inconceivable I can't understand how people sometimes think well we won't will we know one another in heaven absolutely I don't think we even need to dwell on that because even in even in this world as you and I know that many of our greatest Christian moments have come about through fellowship with other Christians there have been times where you've been so conscious of the Lord's closeness to you your heart is filled and thrilled just like remember the two on the road to Emmaus how they felt their hearts burning within them because Jesus was there with them and so often in fellowship that's what we experience we experience this burning this warmth within us which comes about through our fellowship where Christ is central to all and I believe that there will be this continued fellowship within glory but the great thing about the fellowship in glory where Christ will be central to everything is that there will be nothing to spoil that fellowship or to mar the fellowship won't we need to have to say excuse me

I'm going to have to go and leave there's nothing that's going to come in the way continued endless fellowship and again we'll meet up with loved ones who have gone in Christ of course there will be different relationships I think the Bible makes that clear but we will all be one in Jesus Christ remember how on the Mount of Transfiguration how Peter James and John knew Moses and Elijah that was revealed to them and surely there will be that revelation given to us in glory where we will know one another then the question is asked where did they come from and we're told that they came out of great tribulation where did they come from now again I think that this is maybe pointing to the fact that in glory we will remember what happened on earth where did they come from where did they come from in this world they came out of great tribulation that great tribulation wasn't in heaven it was in the world we will not forget this world because it's in this world that you and

I have come to trust Jesus as saviour do you think it would be possible that we could forget that it was in this world that Jesus died on a cross into this world as we were considering last night how he was born into this world are we going to forget that of course not we will remember that point is made very forcibly not looking at heaven but looking at hell remember the rich man and Lazarus remember what's told to the rich man and he's in hell and he's told remember that thou in thy lifetime receive its good things remember it that's a voice from heaven remember you received good things in this world and he would remember everything remember what he had forgotten in this world and it will be the same in glory we will remember everything so this world is a battleground but it's also the place where victories have been won and as we said it's a place where we came to know Jesus but we're told that this number are those who came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb now whether this is a great tribulation that is spoken of in Daniel or whether this is talking about great tribulation in general we could maybe talk about that and debate that but let me just say as I say we're looking at this very briefly tonight the fact is that every

Christian experiences tribulation some Christians experience tribulation to a greater degree than others but it is a fact that it's not a possibility it's not even just a probability it is an absolute fact because Jesus has said it in this world you shall have tribulation no doubts about that and every Christian knows that to be a reality we have our tribulations now of course every person has tribulation and there are many people who aren't Christians who will suffer an awful lot more in this world than Christians some Christians have a fairly easy passage in some respect through this world but every Christian experiences tribulations in the sense of they experience things that the non-Christian doesn't battles with sin battles with temptation do you know that where you've been tempted day and night and sin against God where you're battling with your own sense of failure that you're not who you ought to be remember after you were converted and think you were so full of the

[19 : 35] Lord and you are promising yourself to do great things for the Lord and so often you feel that you're just lying there in the ashes of defeat and you're wondering how is it that I'm not making the progress that I seem to be making and so often there's this sense of difficulty and failure and yet there's so many Christians they bear the burdens of misrepresentation and misunderstanding there are so many things but here we have this wonderful picture that we have in heaven and the tribulation is now all over you know that's one of the great things now I think it's very important to see that those who came out of tribulation that they are in heaven not because of tribulation but because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb trials difficulties problems sore providences do not necessarily bring a person to Jesus sometimes people who experience difficulties in life become very bitter and very cynical and they become antagonistic towards

God but they are in heaven not because of the problems and trials they are in heaven because they have washed the robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb but the great thing is this that the Lord uses the trials and the tribulations and the pressures to mold us and to shape us so that these things which nearly broke your heart are actually being used by God to make you a greater Christian and make heaven a more blessed experience for you maybe there's somebody in here tonight and it's like the very finger of God is pressing on our own air in your experiences maybe your heart is really hurting and you do not know what God has been doing with you what God has done to you but you know the one thing that we can be absolutely persuaded of that in glory where you will see God's purposes unfolding and having unfolded you will then see not as you see now but you will see as he is seeing and you will praise him and you will thank him for what he did and you will see that he administered his the pressure just in the right amount even although it was breaking you here and you were saying to the

Lord oh I could be a much more effective Christian if only it weren't like this that's what the apostle Paul thought remember how he was praying for the thorn of the flesh to be taken away prayed and he prayed and he prayed and as lots of us go through different things and we think we could be a far more effective Christian much better witness if it was only different but the Lord knows what is best for us and so we will see from his side then it says in verse 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 so here they are all now in the immediate presence of the Lord serving him it is real service it will be wonderful to have a service that will be pure and a service that will be I don't know exactly what to say but so often when we do anything for the Lord we just feel the sense of failure you preach and you go out and you say it's a good text I've ruined it you get up and you pray and you sit down and you sometimes feel confused and you try and witness for the Lord and you feel

I just made a mess of that I probably put that person off rather than encouraging them and showing them about Jesus so often in all the different kind of service that we do we often feel a failure in it but there'll be no sense of failure now it'll be a perfect service service that will fill our hearts with joy and happiness in our souls and will serve him day and night in the temple serve him day and night that is simply to serve him in his presence day and night there's no day and night it's just really talking here about continual service you know that it doesn't matter how busy we are for the Lord we've got to stop even Jesus himself when he was in this world and when he was in a state of humiliation in our nature there were times he was so exhausted that he just fell asleep remember when that storm when the disciples were out of their wits with fear Jesus was so tired he was asleep in the boat heard him saying come on come on apart into a desert place apart and rest a while even the son of glory needed his rest and so much how much more do we need it we get exhausted we get tired in service but there we will be energized continually by the presence by the fullness of the Lord perpetual service and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them it's not a beautiful picture there's the Lord and he's dwelling among the people each one individually a lot of people are sometimes invited to a garden party and maybe the queen is there but

I'm quite I've never been and probably I never will but maybe I will I don't know but anyway the queen I would imagine doesn't get round to speak to everybody but maybe even if she did come and she would say how are you nice to see you and all that you would feel wonderful the sense of importance queen spoke to me but I'm sure a lot of people would say well I I didn't even see her I know she was there but I didn't really see her but here is the king and he's dwelling he's dwelling there that's what it tells us he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them he's as a dwell this picture almost of being one with them he's there interacting central to each individual person what a wonderful idea what a wonderful picture that we have and then it says they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more neither shall the sun lighten them nor any heat and again this is simply a picture of showing how all the needs and all the wants and all the difficulties of this life are at an end we hunger for food well we won't hunger anymore we thirst for drink well we won't thirst anymore of course we hunger for more things excuse me simply food we hunger for lots of things in life but we have this idea here that that every need is continually fulfilled there is this satisfying of everything that we are it's a glorious a place that we're free from anything that causes any need and the others it's saying there that the sun shall not the sun shall not lighten nor any heat the heat of the day all these things that cause a discomfort and every moment there we've been refreshed with living water that's what it goes on to say for the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water

[27:18] I've never ever been really really really thirsty in the form of thirst we read about people who've been maybe out in the desert or whatever and they've just maybe gone a day two days with no water I can't imagine it must be horrific but I can remember occasions in my own small way being remember once being up on the hill we're gathering sheep and it was a blistering hot day and been hours and hours and every little stream that there had been it was a very dry summer and there was not a drop of water we hadn't taken anything with us and it became such that I couldn't think of anything but a drink of water there's lots of other drinks I prefer to water but at that particular moment I couldn't think of anything just get me a drink of water it began to consume my very thinking this water

I remember we did find eventually a little stream but here we have this idea in glory that there it's this beautiful beautiful refreshing fountain of water and you can almost get this idea after all the heat and the tiles and the sorrows of this world of just getting it ah the satisfaction and it's like going on with that eternally eternally being satisfied with the beauty of this refreshing water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes beautiful picture it's like again the picture here of the Lord drawing the person close to himself our wee fellow he's grown he's no longer afraid of them but he used to be just terror stricken by these low flying jets they're always flying over the house and they're just as you know they came from over them the noise and he would come in howling and all he had to do was just sort of put your arm around him and say it's alright and you'll be okay in a minute like that's it it's all over that noise it's gone and in a sense here's the

Lord welcoming us into glory all these things that have filled us with terror and fear and hurt us and made us weep you know this is a world of tears we cried coming into this world and there's a strong possibility we might even be crying going out of it we wept with pain and we wept at the graveside we wept in so many different experiences but in glory the weeping is over God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes it's no wonder that the Christian is somebody who has everything I hope I hope that there's nobody in here tonight who is saying I don't want this because a person who doesn't want to be a Christian is really saying I don't want to experience these things and may each and every one of us be granted the grace to know Jesus and in knowing him we will experience his glory let us pray O Lord our gracious

God we thank thee for thy word and we pray that it may indeed encourage us that we may realise that thou are the God who has done great things for us and that thou hast prepared wonderful things for us that just like the Queen of Sheba when she met Solomon and she was just so amazed with all that she saw and she said the half was not told me how much more it will be for us when we enter into glory when we just are amazed at the splendour and the majesty and the dominion and the power we will be saying not only was the half not told us but I didn't really understand any of this it will be far and beyond anything that we could even begin to dream about O Lord our God encourage us in the way and may we know the peace of God that passeth all understanding bless our time together we pray and part us with thy blessing take us home safety take away sin for

Jesus sake Amen