

All People Praise God

What will be the style of music? What songs will we sing? Will we be outnumbered?" asked Kelvin.

Stefon, keyboardist for Love International Church, was telling the praise and worship team about the Christian unity service their congregation was invited to. He was asking that the praise and worship team, choir, and musicians take part.

The interdenominational, multi-racial service was going to be held in six weeks at one of the city's largest churches. Their pastor would be one of several speakers.

"There will be white and black, and people from other backgrounds and cultures taking part in the worship portion," said Stefon to Kelvin, Love International's newest member and convert.

"It's going to be great," piped in Jessica. "Are you really concerned, Kelvin?"

"I'm just saying it will be different, and I'll probably be uncomfortable," he offered. "We don't know their songs and music."

"That is why we all will rehearse together in the coming weeks and will collaborate," said Stefon.

"Give it a try," urged Jessica.

"Yes, you can get some practice in worshipping God with all kinds of people now," added Stefon. "Because if you plan on going to heaven, the Bible says there will be people from every tribe, background, and tongue there. And we all will be praising the Lord!"

1. *Have you experienced a time when many different people groups worshiped together? Describe what happened.*

2. *How is worshipping with brothers and sisters who are not like ourselves a foretaste of heaven?*

3. *Why is being "washed in the blood of the Lamb" important to all Christians?*

Multitudes in Heaven Praise God

Revelation 7:9-12, KJV

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;

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

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,

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.

Revelation 7:9-12, NIV

⁹After 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 before the Lamb.

They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹All 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 worshipped God,

¹²saying:

“Amen!

Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and
honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and
ever.

Amen!”

The beginning of Revelation 7 depicted John’s vision of the angels of heaven withholding judgment on the earth until 144,000 from the tribes of Israel (12,000 from each of the 12 tribes) could be sealed—set apart for God’s service. It is “after this,” in verse 9, that John received a new

vision—or rather, another part of the much larger vision of God’s redemption of His people.

John beheld a great multitude in heaven, so large “that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (vs. 9). The mission to the Gentiles recorded in Acts had only begun decades earlier; here, John saw the mission accomplished. People from all walks of life, of all nationalities and races, now stood “before the throne and before the Lamb,” Lord Jesus.

John noted in verse 10 that this multitude wore white robes, not only representing that they had been made “white in the blood of the Lamb” (vs. 14) but that they were dressed to serve as priests of the Lamb (see 1 Pet. 2:9). In addition, they held palm branches as they worshiped—a scene reminiscent of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1–11; et al.). But this time, instead of shouting “Hosanna!” (meaning, “Save!”), their salvation had now been assured. Palm branches were symbols of victory, and unlike Jesus’ first coming, this time the victory was complete.

In response to this scene, even the angels standing around the throne—and presumably also the elders and four living creatures the angels surrounded—are moved to join in this overwhelming expression of praise: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” (vs. 12). Seven blessings are ascribed to God; it is worth noting that seven is a number of perfection used repeatedly throughout Revelation. God was at last making everything right and perfect again; therefore, praise from all of His creation is the only reasonable response.

4. *How did John describe the multitude he saw in heaven?*

5. *What did this multitude do?*

6. *How did the angels standing around the throne respond to what they saw?*

The Identity of the Multitude

Revelation 7:13-17, KJV

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

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.

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.

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

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.

Revelation 7:13-17, NIV

¹³Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"

¹⁴I 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.

¹⁵Therefore,

"they are before the throne of God

and serve him day and

night in his temple;

and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his

presence.

¹⁶Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat down on them,'

nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For 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.'"

As the worship continued, one of the elders then asked John about the multitude "in white robes" (vs. 13). It seems that Christ, through this elder, wanted John to understand what he was witnessing—especially in light of

the audience he would be relating this vision to, who were likely already experiencing considerable tribulation at the hands of the Romans.

The elder then explained, “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” (vs. 14). While the timing of “the great tribulation” is another of the many mysteries of Revelation, it is clear that this multitude is comprised of those who maintained their faith during this time of tribulation, no doubt including many martyrs. But, it is not the blood that this multitude shed for Christ that saved them, but the blood that Christ had already shed for them.

The elder then explained the eternal purpose of this multitude: they not only stood before the throne of God now, but would continue to, “serv[ing] him day and night in his temple”; in return, God would forever “shelter them with his presence” (vs. 15). The elder then said they would never again hunger, thirst, nor suffer from the heat of the sun. Instead, Jesus would lead them to springs of living water and wipe away their tears. Even before Christ’s return and the creation of the New Jerusalem, they would see God making everything right. Salvation from the death that sin brought into the world will be complete.

This scene in heaven tells suffering believers that ultimately their struggles are worth the effort. Their oppressors may think they are the winners. But in actuality these victims are the real champions.

The Bible does not tell us all we’d like to know about the nature of life in eternity. However, in His presence we will experience joy, blessing, and comfort.

7. *What did one of the elders ask John, and why?*

8. *How did the elder answer his own question?*

9. *How did the elder describe the eternal purpose and condition of this multitude?*

A Heavenly Worship Service

Let's step into John's vision and imagine the scene. Too many people to count, all believers, from every nation and culture, gathered together before the Lamb and the throne of God. Jews and Gentiles together, worshipping the Lord. The multitude wears robes that have been washed clean in the blood of Jesus; they have been made righteous by His victorious death on the Cross. They praise God for the completed work of their salvation that enables them to celebrate for all eternity in heaven.

Angels and elders and four living creatures stand around the throne and respond to the multitude's worship with their own song of praise. Here on earth, already we sing worship songs based on this verse.

One of the elders explains the scene further to John. Those standing before the throne have experienced great tribulation. Now they experience the fulfillment of their salvation. The blood of Jesus has washed them clean, and they stand in righteousness.

In our worship services even now, we serve God as we minister and serve others, showing His love to them. We invite others to experience and dwell in God's presence. Life here on earth is far from perfect, but as those who have been redeemed by the work of the Lamb, we experience a taste of His living water. We look forward to the day when God will make everything right, and we will celebrate Christ's victory in heaven.

10. *When have you experienced a worship service similar to the scene John describes?*

11. *Which aspect of salvation is most precious to you? Why?*

12. *How might you serve God "in His temple" here and now?*

13. *Describe a time when you experienced God leading you to "springs of living water."*

Worship God Together

John described a multitude of believers gathering together before God's throne to worship Him. As redeemed believers, we will be there at that celebration. We celebrate and worship God because He is in control, He brings justice in the end, and He brings those who love Him to Himself. We will stand in that huge audience praising God. However, we don't have to wait until heaven to celebrate and worship God.

► *Create a worship experience, a worship service that may or may not be like one you have experienced before. Include something about God's attributes and Christ's gift of salvation. Think of songs to sing, brainstorm where and when the service would be held, and who you would invite to attend. What different kinds of worship could you include?*

KEY VERSE

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.

—Revelation 7:14, KJV

I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "There 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."

—Revelation 7:14, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of November 8 through November 14

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 47—Clap Your Hands, All You Peoples.
- Tues.** Daniel 4:34-37—An Everlasting Kingdom.
- Wed.** Jude 20-25—Glory to God Now and Forever.
- Thurs.** Psalm 10:12-18—The Lord is King Forever.
- Fri.** Revelation 11:3-10—God's Faithful Witnesses.
- Sat.** Psalm 93—The Lord Is Robbed in Majesty.
- Sun.** Revelation 11:11-19—A Crescendo of Praise.