

LESSON 10

November 7, 2021

Unit III. Visions of Praise

The Rest of the Story

DEVOTIONAL READING: Revelation 1:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 7:9-17

PRINT PASSAGE: Revelation 7:9-17

KEY VERSE

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 7:14b, KJV)

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“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.” (Revelation 7:14b, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Understand how God’s salvation and justice for all people inspire praise and worship.
- Embrace the significance of praising God in unity.
- Respond to God’s love, goodness, and grace with joy and exaltation.

KEY TERMS

Beheld (verse 9)—Greek: *idou* (id-oo’): saw; “looked” (NIV).

Multitude (verse 9)—Greek: *ochlos* (okh’los): a crowd; the common people.

Nation(s) (verse 9)—Greek: *ethnos* (eth’-nos): a race(s); the nations (as distinct as Israel).

Salvation (verse 10)—Greek: *sótéria* (so-tay-ree’-ah): deliverance; salvation.

Throne (verse 11)—Greek: *thronos* (thron’-os): a throne, seat; dominion.

Voice (verse 10)—Greek: *phóné* (fo-nay’): a voice, sound.

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Celebrations that unite people from all over the world are significant and magnificent. How can we celebrate in spite of persecution and a hostile world? The writer of the book of Revelation proclaims that God will preserve believers from every nation, tribe, people group, and language who remain faithful to Him despite hardship.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

In November 2015, the *Washington Post* published an article entitled, “How Prisoners of War Used Their Dreams to Help Them Survive.” Based on letters, diaries, memoirs, and regimental histories of captured soldiers during times of war, the article suggests that people often endure intensely troubling circumstances by focusing their minds on the hope of something beyond their present pain. In their unconscious minds, the soldiers saw themselves free, escaped, enjoying their favorite meal, or back at home with their spouses. Such dreams sustained their hope and gave them a degree of protection against the realities and vulnerabilities of their present conditions. By faith,

today's believers may be strengthened to endure life's challenges by living with not just a dream, but with a reasonable, expectant hope of eternal peace and victory in God's presence.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

In the Bible, the color white is sometimes used as a symbol of purity. The great multitude in white robes featured in Revelation 7 are the “saved”—those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and remained faithful to God during times of trouble (see 3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8; 22:14). More specifically, they are the believers who have remained faithful to God throughout the generations or during a specific time of intense tribulation. Because of their faithfulness, they have been brought before God to receive the inheritance of eternal life which God promises to the righteous. Chapters 7–9 present the opening of the last of the Seven Seals and the sounding of the Seven Trumpets. Modern scholars tend to interpret these chapters as a coded biblical preview of major world events or occurrences prior to the second coming of Jesus, representing the full completion of God's plan for the future of humanity and the earth.

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the questions below.)

1. Recall a time when you participated in a victory celebration (i.e., military, medical, or sports team).
2. Share your personal experience in the celebration.
3. What was the overall mood during the moment?

INSIGHTS

God never forgets the righteous. Even in the most difficult situations and circumstances of life, God watches over His own. God will not only comfort those who have suffered for His sake, but He will also welcome them into His glorious, magnificent presence. There, He will satisfy, reward, and protect them forever from all suffering—hunger, thirst, or pain. The hope of every believer who suffers is that God sees their pain and, in the end, God Himself will give them complete relief and make all their suffering worthwhile.

EXPLORATION

In every situation and circumstance of life, spiritual or natural, Christians must persevere in the confidence that God will make all things right in the end. Many believers who suffer may be tempted to believe that God has abandoned them in their pain—but nothing could be more untrue. Life on earth will come with many troubles, yet every child of God must remain faithful and focused on God so they can endure present sufferings without losing heart. It is helpful for God's people to surround themselves with others who are committed to God—people who can encourage them not only to persevere, but also to live with hopeful anticipation of eternal victory celebration in God's presence. Believers can seek new ways to identify with suffering, struggling people all over the world and encourage their hope in the God who ultimately does not disappoint.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER **COMMENTARY ON REVELATION 7:9-11**

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,

NIV

9 After 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.

10 And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

11 All 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 worshiped God,

Following the reference to the 144,000—the representation of the redeemed in every generation—the writer turned his attention to the second great multitude. The multitude was wearing white robes, carrying palm branches, and shouting loud praises to God. Since ancient times, palm branches have been a symbol of victory and triumph. When Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the people of Israel greeted Him with loud hosannas and palm branches (see John 12:13). This great multitude of people is gathered in God’s presence along with the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures—singing a great hymn to God and to the Lamb. On Palm Sunday, the people cried out “Hosanna, God save us.” Here, in heaven, the shout is different. Instead of “God, save us!” they shout “Salvation!” to celebrate the glorious reality that God has done just what He said. Day and night, they offer a magnificent praise to God, assuming a prostrate posture for worship as they fall on their faces.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

Adult Question:

What can we do to make worship more inclusive for all?

Young Adult Questions:

Notice that the crowd gives God praise and glory in spite of what they have endured. When you experience troubles in life, are you more inclined to praise God for helping you overcome in the end, or complain and blame God for your pain? Why do you think God sometimes chooses to strengthen believers to endure their sufferings rather than deliver them from it?

COMMENTARY ON REVELATION 7:12-14

KJV

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.

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.

NIV

12 saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

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

14 I 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.”

Similar to the earlier praise song (see Revelation 5:12), the multitude lifts up a seven-fold worship chant. The use of the word amen (meaning “it is true”) is a fitting opening and closing to the chant. The long-anticipated salvation of God upon the earth will have been finalized. In the moment, John somehow captured the attention of one of the elders who asks the identity of the great multitude. Rather than guessing, John wisely allowed the leader to answer his own question: “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” (verse 14, NIV). The Great Tribulation mentioned here is thought by some scholars to be the same event referred to in the Olivet Discourse (see Matthew 25:9, 21, and 29). The innumerable multitude represents those who remained faithful until death even after being tested and tried (see Revelation 2:10). Their faithfulness will be rewarded by God with a “crown of life” (Revelation 2:10b). The white robes represent souls redeemed by the saving blood of Jesus that cleanses us: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

Adult Questions:

Many churches have strayed in their preaching and singing emphasis on the blood of the Lamb, in favor of messages centered on praising God for His acts, healing, blessings, etc. Should their emphasis on blessings be balanced with a focus on the significance of Jesus’ blood? Why or why not?

Young Adult Questions:

Jesus Christ died so that one day you would stand in God’s presence to worship Him. How have you incorporated worship into your daily walk with God? In what ways is the worship you observe in church different from or similar to this image of heavenly worship?

COMMENTARY ON REVELATION 7:15-17

KJV

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.

NIV

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 shelter them with his presence.

16 “‘Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,’ nor any scorching heat.

17 “For 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.’”

The entire scene is a heavenly one: the Lamb is presented—as are those who come through the Great Tribulation and the 144,000 preserved by God, our Shepherd and Ruler. At the end of life’s journey, God guides them to fountains of living water of life. There, He will shelter them from all suffering and pain with His own presence and wipe away every tear from their eyes (see Revelation 21:4). While this is a heavenly scene of future events, it should be an inspirational scene for present events and activities here on earth. In the earthly realm, Jesus is the Good Shepherd of every believer—right now, He remains close and cares for them. What happens now is both a glimpse and a contrast of what will happen in eternity. On earth, God gives strength and comfort to endure life’s struggles, but in heaven, God will eliminate all suffering. Sorrows and pain will be gone, and there will be no need for tears.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

Adult Question:

Amid the sufferings of the present world, what consolation do you find in the description of life in God’s presence?

Young Adult Questions:

How might a Christian who is facing sufferings find comfort in these verses? Can you recall and share a time when you have been comforted by God?

LIFE APPLICATION

Refer to Adult Book

(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)

—Pause for self-reflection. God will not forget those who have suffered in this life or for the sake of the kingdom. He will remember them with great joy and comfort in His presence. If you are suffering, take courage. God will see you through it and reward you in the end

(See student lesson’s “Your World!” section.)

—Do you ever imagine heaven? Do you ever share your thoughts and expectations regarding life in God’s presence? Many believers are so absorbed with this life, or so fearful of death, that they cannot embrace a joyful expectation of eternal life with God. This week, journal your thoughts or find a friend with whom to talk about heaven.

Refer to Young Adult Book

(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)

—When life is hard, you may be tempted to feel that God has abandoned you or is not concerned about your situation. This lesson teaches that God is very aware of His children’s sufferings. When life’s circumstances cause you to feel hopeless, you as a believer should remember this vision of hope and know that your future is secure in Jesus.

(See student lesson’s “Your World!” section.)

—When the circumstances of this world seem overwhelming, Paul taught believers to “set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2, NIV). God is greater than everything that troubles you on the earth. No matter how rough it gets or what things look like, don’t let go of your confidence in God. He has everything under control.

NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, November 14, 2021, is ““Who’s in Charge Here?”” The Devotional Reading text is Revelation 1:9-17, the Background Scripture text is Revelation 11, and the Printed Text is Revelation 11:15-19.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, we gather to worship You. We pray that Your Spirit will comfort and keep us during times of trials and self-doubt. Give us the strength we need to share and shine boldly for You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS PRAISE FOR GOD'S ETERNAL REIGN

(November 8-14, 2021)

MONDAY, November 8: “Clap Your Hands, All You Peoples” (Psalm 47)

TUESDAY, November 9: “An Everlasting Kingdom” (Daniel 4:34-37)

WEDNESDAY, November 10: “Glory to God, Now and Forever” (Jude 20-25)

THURSDAY, November 11: “The Lord Is King Forever” (Psalm 10:12-18)

FRIDAY, November 12: “God’s Faithful Witnesses” (Revelation 11:3-10)

SATURDAY, November 13: “The Lord Is Robed in Majesty” (Psalm 93)

SUNDAY, November 14: “A Crescendo of Praise” (Revelation 11:11-19)