SUNDAY EVENING MESSAGE

Part Three – "The Things That Shall Be Hereafter"

Revelation 7:9–17 – "A Multitude No Man Could Number"

The Martyred Multitude

Introduction

Last week we saw the 144,000 sealed servants of Israel — marked by God, protected through the judgments, set apart for service on the earth. Tonight the camera moves from earth to Heaven. John sees a second group: "*a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*" (v. 9).

This group includes the martyrs of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9–11). Chapter 6 asked, "Who shall be able to stand?" Chapter 7 answers. The sealed stand on earth. This multitude stands before the throne.

III. The Martyred Multitude (vv. 9–17)

A. Who They Are (vv. 9–10)

Two things encourage us immediately.

1. There is a great number. "Which no man could number." Many, many people will be saved during the Tribulation. Affliction has a way of turning people to God. "*But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*" (Exodus 1:12). John Walvoord said it plainly: during the Tribulation, countless people of all nations will come to know Christ. It will be a time of salvation in spite of persecution and martyrdom.[1]

2. They are from every nation. Jews will be among them. So will Gentiles. The 144,000 may well be the witnesses God uses to reach many of them. Whether this multitude was martyred during the first six seals or after the sealing, the point is the same: the gospel will run through the whole earth even while judgment falls.

They have palms in their hands. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people took palm branches and cried, "Hosanna" (John 12:12–13). J. Vernon McGee said the palms are the sign of victory in Christ.[2] Swindoll added that they speak of celebration, deliverance, and jubilation.[3] In the Feast of Tabernacles, palms were used to make booths (Leviticus 23:40). These martyrs are celebrating a finished deliverance.

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[1]John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Galaxie Software, 2008), 146.

[2]J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 954.

[3]Charles R. Swindoll, Insights on Revelation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 120.

They are clothed in white robes. Verse 14 will explain the white: they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. White is purity and positional righteousness (Revelation 3:4–5; 6:11; 19:8).

They are standing before the throne, not seated as the elders. These people do not represent the church. They do not represent Israel alone. They are Tribulation saints — Jew and Gentile — who came out of the great tribulation.

They cry with a loud voice, "*Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb*" (v. 10). They have endured pain and death. Now they are delivered and rewarded. Salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb.

B. Who Joins Them (vv. 11–12)

All the angels, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures fall before the throne and worship: "*Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen*." Seven ascriptions — complete praise.

Notice that the angels do not speak of salvation. They are not fallen creatures. And they are not singing; they are saying. Redeemed people sing. Heaven is full of singing, worship, and praise. We had better practice now.

C. How They Got There (vv. 13–14)

One of the elders asks John, "*What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*" John answers, "Sir, thou knowest." The elder explains: "*These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*."

They were put to death for their faithfulness. The way into this company is not survival. It is the blood. "*Without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22). Their robes were made white in the blood of the Lamb — the same blood that cleanses every believer in every age.

Practical point: You cannot stand before that throne in your own goodness. The multitude stands because their robes are washed. The invitation is the same tonight: come through the blood.

D. What They Receive (vv. 15–17)

"*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*." The temple here is not an earthly building. It is the throne room of chapters 4 and 5. There will be a millennial

temple (Ezekiel 40–48). In the New Jerusalem there will be none, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22).

These verses contrast earth with Heaven. On earth they hungered and thirsted. In Heaven the Lamb feeds them and leads them to living fountains of waters. As the Tribulation progresses, Antichrist will force the mark; without it no one may buy or sell (Revelation 13:16–17). Believers who refuse the mark will starve. In Heaven they are fed.

"*Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat*." The scorching judgments are over. "*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*." The Lamb is not only the Sacrifice. He is the Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11–16).

This is the same promise God will later make for all the redeemed (Revelation 21:4). For these martyrs it begins the moment they stand before the throne.

Practical Application

1. The gospel will not fail in the darkest days. A multitude no man can number will be saved during the Tribulation. Affliction does not silence the witness; it multiplies it.

2. White robes come only from the blood. Position, character, and suffering do not wash a robe. The Lamb does.

3. Heaven is the answer to earth's hunger. Whatever the world withholds from the faithful, the Lamb supplies. Tears are wiped. Thirst is ended.

4. Practice the worship you will offer then. Redeemed people sing. If Heaven is full of praise, the church on earth should not be silent.

5. You can stand. Chapter 6 asked the question. Chapter 7 shows the answer. Those who stand are those who have fled to the Lamb. Trust Him tonight, and you will never have to hide from His face.

"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Next: Revelation 8 – The Seventh Seal and the Trumpets Begin