

# The lamb who is the lamp

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, please turn back with me as we looked at last Lord's Day to the seventh chapter of the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation.

And we're going to remind ourselves of what we read last time in the second half of Revelation chapter 7. And then we're going to skip to the end, or perhaps more accurately, the climax of this great book.

Revelation chapter 7 and at verse 9. This is the Word of God. After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out in a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

And all the angels were standing around the throne, and around the elders, and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen. Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, Who are these clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?

[ 1 : 37 ] I said to him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and been made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

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 in his presence.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to the springs of living water.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Our reading this morning is from Revelation chapter 21, reading from verse 1 to verse 8, then picking up again at verse 22, and reading through into chapter 22.

Revelation chapter 21 from the beginning. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

[ 2 : 47 ] I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new. Then he said, Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.

He said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water, without cost, from the spring of the water of life.

Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur.

[ 4 : 03 ] This is the second death. Then at verse 22, I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it.

On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.

[ 5 : 13 ] The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night.

They will not need the light of the Lamb, or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever. Well, again, it's a joy and a privilege to be with you again this morning, and to gather around God's Word, and hopefully you got some benefit from the ministry that was exercised by the Holy Spirit last week, as we studied this same passage in this chapter 7 of Revelation.

And what I want to do is, I want to just rehearse something of that very briefly. Because we imagine that the second half of this chapter was some great picture, and we saw that one of the identifying features of this picture was the Lamb.

The Lamb was in the midst of this, and we saw various references throughout this chapter that focused on the Lamb. But we also saw that significant in this picture was this great multitude. And it is to that second part of this picture that I want to turn initially and focus on this morning as we read God's Word.

[ 6 : 43 ] So let's ask God's help as we engage in studying His Word. Heavenly Father, we ask You to bless us, and to lead us, and to guide us, to give us, as You promised, the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

that as we open up Your Word, it may speak to us in new ways and in fresh ways, but that it may penetrate our hearts and leave us different people.

Father, renew and redirect from cowardice that dare not face new truth, from laziness that is content with half-truth, and from arrogance that thinks it knows all truth.

What we have not give us, what we know not teach us, and what we are not make us. To Your glory and to the advancement of Your kingdom, in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Well, again, as many of you who know me know, I'm very much about trying to simply convey simple truths that really any of us, as we look through this passage, could glean out of it.

[ 7 : 59 ] It's very clear, it's very simple, it's very straightforward. As my good friend Alistair Begg often says, the main things are the plain things.

And one of the things that I've been trying to do is trying to show you that this book of Revelation is not something complicated, it doesn't have to be confusing, but it's actually very simple and straightforward because the main things are the plain things.

And we focused last time, you'll remember, on the focus of the Lamb. The Lamb who saves in substitution, the Lamb who sits in victory, and the Lamb who shepherds His people.

But the second half of this half of chapter 7 focuses not on the Lamb, although the Lamb is still there and very much present, but on that great multitude of people that have been gathered around there.

It's beautifully described for us in wondrous terms in that opening verse of this second half, verse 9. I looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

[ 9 : 26 ] What a beautiful, beautiful scene. What a beautiful picture. And it is a picture, first and foremost, of a promised gathering.

Way back in the Old Testament, as God was making His covenant, making a promise, making a binding legal agreement with Abram, His great promise and His great declaration to Abram was that He was going to make him numerous.

He was going to make him great amongst all the nations. And here, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years later, thousands of years later, as we come to this great scene at the end of time, when God has gathered all His promised people, the elect of God, are gathered here according to

His covenant promise to Abraham, we have a promise that is fulfilled.

A gathering as numerous as the stars is now before our very eyes in this great scene and in this great picture.

And once again, this is a timely message for a people who are living through toil and trial. A message for people who are fearful and uncertain that we have a God here who keeps His promises.

[11:07] A God who hundreds and thousands of years later still remembers the promise and still is in control fulfilling those promises never frustrated from those promises being complete.

And I hope that that is a great encouragement to you as it is an encouragement to me that God is there that we should never doubt His promises.

Indeed, God wants us to remind Him of His promises. He wants us to if you like call Him out on His promise. This you have promised Heavenly Father.

Not in a way that the prosperity preachers have declared but in a way that shows we are a faithful people who are committed to His will and His purpose.

That our prayer is genuine. Thy will be done. Recognizing that in the doing of that will God fulfill His great promise and His great purpose.

[12:18] The second thing that we notice about that that is very clear and very evident is that it is a multinational gathering from every nation from every tribe.

And again that brings us back to the picture that God gave us of that Garden of Eden where there was harmony where there was beauty where there was no division.

And here we have a multi-nation gathering of that bliss and of that harmony being restored. We are pre now Tower of Babel where God in His judgment divided the nations.

Now in His grace and mercy and in His saving redemption brings the nations together. Scattered in judgment He restores the elect people in unity.

And you see unity of the people of God is not some ecumenical project but is our very identity in Christ.

[13:42] And that is what biblical ecumenism is about. That is what biblical unity is about. God never intended us to sit down and say we should get all the churches together no matter what they believe or no matter what they think because we are somehow all one in the fact that we claim to be a church.

And the reason I know that when God speaks of unity He does not speak of denominational unity is that there was no denominations in those times.

When God and when the Bible speaks of unity He's not speaking about some project to get people together irrespective of their beliefs but the exact opposite.

He is saying that there is a unity which has been grafted into us by the very nature of our identity in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ because we have come together and we are part of the body of Christ we are by nature of that identity united.

And the third thing that we notice here is that these are a worshipping people a worshipping people.

[15:09] Do you know as I read that I'm reminded of Jesus' marvellous encounter with that woman at the well. It became very evident as you read through that story in John's Gospel that what Jesus was doing and what he was seeking to do as he led that woman into deeper understandings of who he was and of the true faith is that he desired to create not just simply people who knew him but people who worshipped him.

And that reminds us that worship true worship in spirit and in truth worship is the reserved activity of the people of God.

unconverted people cannot truly worship. Unbelievers unconverted people are at best eavesdroppers on the activity of the believing church of the true church.

And notice that worship has a vibrancy about it. Verse 10 And crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

Praise them was essentially adoration, a loud voice. They were not ashamed of the gospel. They were not ashamed of crying out in a loud voice of worshipping.

[16:39] There was no sense of embarrassment. And their worship was directed to God. They were thankful. They were focused upon the Lamb.

And how often is that the case that as you stand at the door as a minister and some people come out and they say, I didn't get very much out of that today.

And of course the honest answer is, well, it wasn't about you getting anything out of it. We were gathered here to worship God, to bring our attentions upon him and not to in some way sense of form cater for you.

And they were singing you see and they were worshipping and that's the difference there between just singing and truly worshipping. It's got nothing to do with the kind of songs we sing. It's got nothing to do with whether they are ancient or modern. It's got nothing to do with whether we have a praise band or a noggin or a robed choir. because anybody could sing but only the people of God could worship.

[ 17 : 52 ] And the distinction is that they understood salvation. They understood that the source of all that made them what they were was the saving death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that was the mark of Reformed theology and the Reformed theology of Calvin. A singular focus upon God on all that we did in worship.

And so worship glorifies God. The salvation we proclaim is all of God and all of grace and all in Christ. In verse 14 is the understanding that they had salvation.

Their robe had been washed white in the shed blood of the Lamb. Their robes as we remembered last time as we went back to that encounter of God with Adam and Eve, how he provided a clothing and a covering for them.

Their robes spoke of the ultimate clothing that had been provided for them by God as a covering for their sin. Cleansed and clothed, they worship God as they worship, appreciative of their salvation.

[ 19 : 15 ] All these once were sinners, defiled in thy sight, now arrayed in pure garments, their praise they unite.

Unto him. People who stand in church and don't sing or can't sing, people that I often see at funerals, arrogantly standing there refusing to engage in the singing.

It used to annoy me but then I understand now they've nothing to sing about. This is a disastrous time.

Why would we sing when someone that we knew and loved had died? We sing because our focus has gone beyond.

Beyond the circumstances to a focus on a God who is able, who fulfills his promises and brings us peace in whatever circumstances the world may hold.

[ 20 : 27 ] If you are cleansed and clothed and saved, you will be worshipping, you will be serving, satisfied.

Verse 16, they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst. The sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. There is the culmination, if you like, as we saw last time about how the Old Testament brings us to a point where we are expecting something, expecting the one who would be the ultimate high priest, expecting one who would be the ultimate king in the life of David, expecting the one who would not only prophesy the word, but would himself be the living word.

Here is the end and the climax of all those yearnings and longings for prophet, priest, and king.

And all those longings for satisfaction of the ancient people of God were met in the saving death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

And these people rejoiced in that satisfaction. now there was one who could cleanse. Now there was one who could make their garments white as snow.

[ 22 : 08 ] Now what I want you to do now is to turn to that final chapter of the book of Revelation. Sorry, the second last chapter of the book of Revelation, chapter 21.

1. And as we have there, we have a deeper insight into this great picture of the climax and of the final gathering together of the people of God.

But in amongst all this positive stuff about people worshipping, people singing, serving, and being satisfied, we have the ultimate reality.

And it's often a hard reality because often it speaks of family, of friends, it can often speak of a wife or husband. Sadly, in our day and generation, it can often speak of our sons and daughters and of our grandchildren.

children. Then ultimately the world ends in division. And of course that division is not something new.

[ 23 : 25 ] It's a division that has run through the whole of the teaching of the Bible. Jesus himself spoke about division. division. And that division is now very clear.

Because before the throne of God and within these worshipping people are nothing more but nothing less than the redeemed people of God.

What is clear in that picture is a picture of the new, the new creation. The redeemed of God.

The old has gone. They have been dismissed and dealt with.

Two very famous preachers were walking along one day on a Monday morning and one asked the other, what did you preach on this Lord's Day? And he said, I preached on hell and the reality of the separation between the people of God and those who know not the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 24 : 49 ] And his colleague turned to him and said, did you preach it with tears in your eyes? God's love to God and God and that is the burden that all of us who are ministers take into our pulpits each Lord's Day.

And that's the burden that many of you should have for your lost neighbour or your lost family member. That as things stand at the moment, they are not part of that great multitude.

they are not secure. They are not under the blood of the Lamb. They do not know anything of the fulfilment of that promise.

this penultimate chapter of this book of Revelation talks about a bride, about a city, about a temple, and very interestingly about a garden.

And that is, if you like, the backdrop to this great picture. a bride who comes in verse 2 of chapter 21 adorned for her husband.

[ 26 : 21 ] It reminds us of that great hymn, doesn't it, the bride eyes, not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face. I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace.

Not at the crown he giveth, but on his pierced hand, the lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land.

And that is a beautiful picture, a beautiful picture of the bride ready and prepared for her husband.

husband. It's often the case that when I'm about to do a wedding, I will have a rehearsal on the night before or a couple of nights before where the main participants in the wedding turn up and this very simple, ordinary looking girl comes in dressed in her jeans and her flat shoes.

And then three days later, this young lady is almost transformed, unrecognisable. She's in her wedding dress, prepared and adorned for her husband.

[ 27 : 47 ] in that radiant beauty and splendour of her wedding day, ready to walk down the aisle.

And that is a beautiful picture of the transformation that takes place in you and in me when we come in saving faith to Christ and accept that sacrifice.

Oh, we've had another picture of that in our robes being made clean. But now we are that ordinary girl who once was in jeans and flat shoes, now adorned for her husband.

And the other thing that often happens as I stand at the front with the groom to be and the best man and we go through the rehearsal and the bride comes walking down the aisle.

The question that I'm often asked is, am I allowed to look round and look at her? And of course the answer is yes.

[ 29 : 03 ] There is an eagerness to see his bride and the efforts that that bride has gone to to prepare herself for her husband.

And that is the eagerness and the joy that Christ has as he sees his bride approaching. Echoes of course of the prodigal son as the father who stood on the hill, the only time in the Bible that God has ever seen to be in a hurry as the father runs to greet his returning son.

There is a bride, there is a city, the new Jerusalem, a place that is lined with the glory of God and the splendour of God, a new creation.

We're going to be people in that world. we're going to be liberated. There will be no more bondage and no more decay and no more bondage to sin.

That pristine beauty of creation unspoiled, a new Jerusalem, this is a God built city, a place where God is glorified and his light and his splendour fills the whole of the city.

[ 30 : 51 ] But you will notice in verse 22 of chapter 21, we're given a kind of strange detail because it's almost, the best way of describing it is as a negative description.

And I saw no temple in that city. Now what on earth would be the purpose of God showing John round the new Jerusalem and John noticing that there was no temple?

Well for that we need to understand the significance of the temple and the significance of the dwelling.

The temple you see was something that God had urged his people to have and to do. In the wanderings in the wilderness he allowed them to build a place that would be a place where God

was in their midst.

And then when they came to Jerusalem he gave Solomon very clear and very specific instructions about building a temple and within that temple was to be the Holy of Holies representative of the place where God would dwell.

[ 32 : 16 ] So in the wanderings in the wilderness there was a dwelling place. In Jerusalem in the temple there was a dwelling place of God the Holy of Holies.

And of course the question is now asked in the New Testament where is the dwelling place of God? Now the answer is definitely not the church.

The dwelling place of God in the New Testament is in our lives. We are dwelt in by the Holy Spirit. That's the message of Ephesians. That as we are brought from death to life, as we are brought from being far away to near, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, by the Father and by the Son.

God saves to dwell within us. And so the temple of God, the dwelling place of God, becomes our own lives as believers.

[ 33 : 29 ] We are indwelt by the living God. But the question you see is why then is there no need for a dwelling place of God in the New Jerusalem?

Because God is everywhere in that place. He is all around and that's what John is explaining. And I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb.

God dwells in the New Jerusalem in all his fullness. His presence is everywhere.

glory. And you see, that reminds us too of one of the great glories of salvation. The Holy of Holies in the temple here in Jerusalem was a place where no man could go that was excluded by that great heavy curtain you'll remember that was torn in two when Jesus died on the cross.

That represented the separation between the Holy God and the sinful people. But now there is no need for temple because division is gone.

[ 35 : 03 ] Access is now here. Verse 3 of chapter 21 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man and he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.

No distance between God and self because in the New Jerusalem our sin has ultimately been dealt with. It is no more.

There is no need for a temple because there is no need for a place of sacrifice for sin. It is no more by Christ's death.

Again, a God who keeps his promises to wipe away every sin to provide the water of life that will quench the thirst of the thirsty.

The lamb is all the glory. Do you know, any of us who are students of history will remember the optimism with which the United Nations was first established.

[ 36 : 30 ] we were going to get all the nations of the world together. We were going to get everybody seated round the table. We were going to get educated people and they would all talk together.

They would listen to each other and they would somehow form some great harmony that will prevent war from ever being on the face of the earth again.

and here we have decades and decades later that have been marked by war and all the sharing of resources that was going to take place.

We have poverty. We have division. We have racial disharmony. And we are still looking at all the false ways of seeking to re-establish those things.

And here is the truth, friends. In one sweeping moment, the Lord is going to return and there will be no more pain and no more suffering.

[ 37 : 39 ] There will be no more black or white or whatever colour. There will be one division. Those who belong to God and those who have spent a lifetime rejecting the gospel of God and the saving death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Where did we ever get the idea, the wicked, destructive idea, that everyone goes to heaven?

And that's the prevailing ideology of our day and of our generation. And it's sadly the prevailing ideology that is taken into most of our pulpits.

That all we need to do to get to heaven is to die. And nothing could be more cruel, nothing could be more a distortion of the gospel, nothing could be more dangerous than that kind of misunderstanding.

This great picture is so many things as we've seen. But it is, I think, two things.

[ 39 : 13 ] It is a call for evangelism. A call to see that God has still given us time to reach out, to reach out to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christ, to offer the only true peace, the only true unity, the only true reconciliation that is possible, to offer it freely and openly and throughout the world.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun. Where is that passion to reach the least, the last, and the lost? Christ. These pictures are a call for evangelism, for fervent evangelism, for real evangelism, for passionate evangelism.

And it is, too, friends, a call for perspective. the Lord is going to return.

And he's going to bring this, and how obvious this is in these days, this sad, old, tired, broken, divided world.

[ 40 : 42 ] He's going to bring it to an end. Maybe this morning. it might be this afternoon.

It might be the evening. It might be soon. But in amongst that knowledge that belongs only to God, God wants us to have a perspective.

That this world is not our home. That we are just passing through. But it ends, of course, all this with the great understanding of the Lamb who's in the throne.

God is saying, what's doing? Are you increasingly concerned about circumstances? Or are you increasingly trusting in that God who will bring all things to an end, all things to completion, and all things will be good.

And in that day, friends, we will not need a temple because the Lamb will be in our midst and we will raise our collective voices, the whole elect of God and cry, the Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land.

[ 42 : 42 ] Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, we thank you for these glorious truths that you have revealed to us in the Bible and we pray, Heavenly Father, that this day we will know if we are in Christ that we are settled, that we are saved, that our salvation is secure.

Upon a life I did not lead, upon a death I did not die, on another's life, on another's death, I set my whole eternity. But, Heavenly Father, if we are listening to this and we do not yet have that security and surety in Christ, we pray that we will not simply set what we feel now aside as some emotional feeling, but that we might know that the hand of God is on our lives, is calling us, is drawing us near, and that God waits like that father waiting for the prodigal son to return.

And God delights to rush to us with open arms to offer us salvation that is of his gift and grace.

Heavenly Father, bless us, watch over us, and grant us your presence and your peace. Through Jesus Christ the Lord, we ask this.

Amen.