

Will You Be There?

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[0 : 0 0] what will heaven be like? What will heaven be like? It's a question we've all asked ourselves, and not just because we're naturally curious creatures, but because there are times in life when the world hurts so much that we long to be there in that land of light and glory, far away from all the tears we shed. The book of Revelation in image form gives us a taster of heaven, and that taste whets our appetite for the reality of heaven. In these verses and onwards, John is given a vision of a multitude of people gathered before the throne of God, and the question he seems to ask is this, will you be there? Will you be there?

It's such a glorious multitude. It's such a blessed multitude. It's such a happy multitude, but will you be there with them? When we die, shall we join with this joyful multitude in heaven, dressed in white robes, and sing the praises of King Jesus forever? Or shall we join with the condemned masses of hell, dressed in rags, and crying out in pain forever? Where, oh where, will you be on that day? The invitation of the gospel is to make sure that when it comes our time, we join with heaven's multitude and not with hell's masses, that by faith in Jesus we find ourselves on that day, dressed in white robes, forever praising the name of our Lord and blessed happiness, will you be there? Will you be there?

This evening, for a short while, we want to ask five questions. Will you be there before the throne? Will you be there with the multitude? Will you be there with the redeemed? Will you be there with the victorious? Will you be there with the praising? Life is unpredictable, and before we know it, we'll find ourselves before God's judgment throne. In 100 years' time, every one of us will have been at God's judgment throne. Let us, before we leave this place tonight, ensure that we're bound for an eternity with a glorious multitude of heaven by trusting in Jesus Christ, and not with the gloomy masses of hell, forever rejecting him again.

First of all then, will you be there before the throne? Will you be there before the throne? In the very center of heaven is a throne upon which God sits. And in the midst of that throne, in the center of that throne, there's a lamb, the glorified, exalted Lord Jesus Christ. Just like the sun is at the center of our solar system and everything orbits the sun in regular procession, so the throne of God is at the center of heaven. And gathered before that throne is, we read, a multitude that no one can number, and they're standing.

[3 : 4 2] Could we see it with our eyes the way John did? We'd see a vast crowd, numbering billions upon billions, encircling a central throne, where all we can see is the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, resplendent in dazzling holiness and glorious beauty. Here there are billions of people who on earth had lived with Christ at the center of their hearts, that lived in the daily awareness of a Christ they couldn't see and they couldn't touch, but nevertheless, in whom they trusted. And there they are, standing before the throne, adoring and worshiping the Lord of glory. Their whole lives through, they'd been taunted by the world around them, saying, where is your God? And there were times, perhaps, when they felt themselves the twinges of doubt. But now they're there, and they're standing before the fulfillment of all they'd ever imagined, and more and besides. Because they see with glorified, perfected eyes the glory of the Jesus who on their account had been tortured and crucified.

They see the scars in his hands and the marks in his head. That same face, which once had been twisted in pain, is now shining brighter than the sun. There's a small hidden pool in a forest near to my family home in the north of Scotland. I, who know these woods very well indeed, discovered it by accident a couple of years ago. And there are still occasions when I look for it, but I can't find it. But when I do find it, I just sit and stare. It's a magical pool. There's always a thin layer of mist hanging above it.

It belongs more in a fantasy world than in our world. And I could sit there for hours, watching the golden rays of the sun dancing on its surface, or listening to its lapping waters in a gentle highland breeze. If I had a sketchbook, I'd trace my hidden pool's outline. But even the greatest artist couldn't do justice to the beauty of my hidden pool, that glorious throne in heaven, in the midst of which is our glorified Lord, we could stand there not just for hours, staying at its wonder, but for days and for years and for decades and for centuries and for millennia.

There's just so much to take in. There's so much glory to absorb. There's so much praise to offer, so much peace to enjoy, so much joy to experience there. We have no earthly beauty compared to its heavenly majesty. Will you be there standing before that throne? Those who stand there had lived with Christ at the center of their hearts, no matter how much it had cost them, and now they live with the reality of Jesus Christ at the center of heaven. Though having not seen Jesus with their eyes, they loved him. But now seeing Jesus with perfected eyes, they love him even more.

Surely this is a greater vision than could be described with mere human words, a greater dream than could ever be imagined. Will you be there? Will you be there standing before that throne? [7 : 35] Second, will you be there with the multitude? Will you be there with the multitude? The throne of God in heaven is the centerpiece, but gathered all around is what John calls a great multitude that no one can number from every nation and tribe and people and language. Shall heaven be deserted such that the only Christian, that only Christians from our denominational grouping shall be present and no other?

No, heaven shall contain a great multitude. No one can number. The word for number used in verse 9 is that word from which we get our English word arithmetic. And John is saying, no matter how good you are at arithmetic, you'll never be able to compute the number of that vast and blessed multitude standing before the throne of God and of the Lamb. The words John is using here refer to the promises God made to Abraham that through his descendants, through his blessed seed, his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of the sky and the grains of sand on the seashore. No man could ever number them. And now, through Abraham's seed, the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, what was once only a promise is now a reality.

Here standing before the throne of God are the fruits of Jesus' mission, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection, and labor. Mixed together in one seamless unit are all that divided us here on earth, be it tribe, be it nation, be it people, be it language. Wars are fought between nations, but in heaven they gather together as one. Languages fight against each other for supremacy, but in heaven there is one. All who have here placed their faith in Jesus Christ are gathered in this great multitude. Will there be many in heaven? More than we know.

And every one will owe their presence there to the Lamb on the throne whose scars speak of sacrifice and whose eyes are filled with love for them. There are billions upon billions in this crowd. We do not know when Christ shall come again. He may yet wait another 10,000 years before his advent, but suppose he came tomorrow, this crowd would still defy number. Here we see all manner of colors and ethnicities. There shall be no western dominance in heaven, even as in reality there's no western dominance in the church of today. Will there be more in heaven than there will be in hell?

[10 : 29] We do not have an answer, but what we do know is that we are to view God's predestining grace, predestinating grace, as not limiting the number of his people, but rather ensuring the salvation of his people of a great multitude no man can number, not the frozen chosen, the countless crowd.

The question is this, will you be there with that crowd? Will your face be seen in that multitude, your voice heard in the heavenly choir, and your hands lifted up with palm branches in praise of King Jesus? Will you be there? Will you be there? Third, will you be there with the redeemed? Will you be there with the redeemed? White is the color of purity. We still use expressions such as white as the driven snow. The inhabitants of heaven may be taken from every nation, tribe, people, and language, but they will all have this one thing in common. They're dressed in white. No matter how dirty the rags they wore on earth, in heaven they're clothed in the spotless white of purity. Later in verse 14 we read that these robes have been made white in the blood of the Lamb. Consider this, that the crimson blood of Jesus, rather than staining us red, washes us clean. These robes are white because Jesus shed his blood on the cross for us, and in doing so he washed all our sins away. For us he submitted himself to the humiliation and agony of the cross. For us his soul was crushed even as he bore the penalty of our sin. For us he was bruised and he was battered. But

even as the blood dropped from his head and his hands and from his side and his feet, by faith it washed a sinful people clean. Jesus washed and redeemed every one of this multitude and bought them back from the condemnation of their sin. Each of them was by nature hellbound, but in him and through him and from him is plenteous redemption. They once wore dirty, disgusting rags, but now in heaven their robes outshine those worn by the angels who never sinned at all. Their guilt has been taken away.

Their shame is a thing of the past. It's now all purity and all health. Among them were murderers and thieves, and they're now dressed in white. Among them were decent, clean living folks, dressed in white.

Their white, you see, has no function of how good they were in life, but how effective the blood of Christ is at taking away sin. Will you be there with the redeemed in heaven? There is only one way to wash our robes white, and it's not by our good works or our religious efforts. It's by faith in the Jesus who shed his blood for us on the cross. It's as we ask him to give us clean hearts and to wash away all our sin. Then and there we become the redeemed on earth. All that changes is that when the multitude is gathered in the glory of God, we shall be with the redeemed in heaven. Will you be there?

Have you trusted and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, risen and crucified and risen for you? Will you be there? Fourth, will you be there with the victorious? Will you be there with the victorious? [14:41] Hosanna, they cried. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. The crowd gathered at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and they waved palm branches in the air, and they worshiped him as Messiah and Lord. In modern days, people treat victorious heroes with ticker tape parades.

But back then, people greeted victorious heroes by waving palm branches in the air. The palm branch was the symbol you see of victory. And here, every member of that multitude, which cannot be numbered, holds in his or her hands a palm branch, which he uses to celebrate and rejoice the victory of Christ over the whole world. These standing there are the innumerable victors who have, by the grace of Christ, overcome the world by virtue of what Christ has done. They're more than conquerors, despite what they tell our children. In any sport that are always winners and that are always losers.

Would we rather be in the winning team or the losing team? We get a snapshot of this at the World Cup final, where there's nothing that can console the losing team, and there's nothing that can dull the delight of the delight of the winning team as they go up the podium to receive the winner's medal.

What team would we rather be in that day? The winners or the losers? Would we rather be crying in frustration on the turf, or crying with joy holding up the World Cup?

There was a man in Rogert, a small highland village between where Katie comes from and I come from, called Eric Mackay. I don't know if you remember Eric, Katie. Eric was eccentric. Eric was not blessed with good looks. He wore a hairnet. Eric had no teeth and regularly ate soap. We might have said of Eric that he was a poor soul, not least because he was very slow of mind. But Eric was a very faithful Christian. And when he'd pray, he would transport me to this scene in Revelation chapter 7. He would close every prayer with the plea, Lord, help us to stick with the winners. Lord, help us to stick with the winners. Eric Mackay died 10 years ago, which means that his face now belongs among this innumerable multitude of conquerors standing before heaven's throne. Alex looking at me as if you probably remember Eric Mackay. Yep, there we go. And Christ has given Eric his own palm branch to wave.

[17:46] Eric's prayer has always and forever been answered. Despite all his disadvantages, Eric stuck with the winners in life, and he now stands with them in heaven.

Will you be there with the winners? It might seem in this life that we're always the losers. The church is always under pressure, and there are times when we too feel that we have lost more than we have gained on account of Christ. But the reality is very different. Though we may feel small in number here on earth, we're the winners, and heaven belongs to us. In hard times, let's keep our eyes fixed on the victorious multitude gathered before the throne of God, and despite what's going wrong with us in this life, stick with the winners, will you be there with the victorious? Don't give up. Stay the course.

Keep faith, and you will be. Will you be there with the victorious? And lastly, will you be there with the praising? Heaven will be very far from a boring place.

What we see here in Revelation chapter 7 is but a tiny snippet of all there'll be to see and to do in heaven. But for a moment, close your eyes and open your ears instead, and what do we hear? We hear the sound of the praises of heaven, a vast crowd singing, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. There is much to see in heaven but so much more to hear. [19 : 37] The orchestra of the voices of the redeemed reaches a crescendo of noise as the entirety of the innumerable multitude sings the blessed words, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. In the beginning of the Tower of Babel, mankind in our pride tried to reach heaven, so God confused us by giving us many languages. But in a reversal of Babel's confusion, in heaven there shall be only one language. What it shall be or sound like we do not know. It shall neither be the English of William Shakespeare nor the Gaelic of Dougal Buchanan. It shall be entirely new.

It shall be the language of heaven in which eternally we shall sing as one the praises of the King of Heaven. Will you be there singing the praises of King Jesus? The alternative is that we spend eternity cursing ourselves, cursing everyone else, and especially cursing Jesus. But in heaven there is no curse at all, only the blessedness of praise and worship. What we have done so imperfectly on earth shall be perfected in heaven as every heart and every mind, every soul and every body shall be taken up entirely with the glory of the King. And we'll sing like we've never sung before, our voices joining perfectly with those of the angels and of the heavenly beings. Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne unto the Lamb. And in singing and worshiping our hearts shall be filled with indescribable joy and happiness. Our voices will join together under the orchestration of the Holy Spirit to produce a song that will take the angels' breath away. For these are the praises of those for whom Jesus shed his blood and through him have overcome the world. Will you be there with that innumerable multitude?

I've been there together with 60,000 of my fellow countrymen, singing the national anthem of Scotland at a rugby international, singing with pride. And on the last night of the proms, I've proudly joined with a million other British people in singing God save the King. But the prospect of joining with a billion, billion others in singing the praises of King Jesus, does it not fill you with delight? Let me close with a couple of applications.

First, the apostle John wrote this book to encourage first century Christians under pressure on account of their faith.

And John gave this vision to them to encourage them to persevere, to keep going. Do not renounce your faith. Overcome your weaknesses and doubts.

[23 : 03] Keep going right until the end. Unfortunately, many Christians fall away. Will they be there? Who knows?

If they were true Christians, they shall be, but their perseverance in faith is the sign and mark of their authenticity. But let that never be a question that any ask of us. Or shall he be there?

Because he once believed, but now doesn't. Let's keep going. Despite all the pressure and all the doubts and all the struggle, let's keep going.

Because all the sweat and all the tears are worth it. For the vision God gives us here is more glorious than anything we could imagine. Secondly, John wrote this book to first century Christians who were on mission.

Not every person that we share the gospel with will believe and join with us in this heavenly quiet in Revelation 7. But some will.

[24 : 09] Some will. And because of our effort and mission, they will enjoy eternal joy and peace in heaven.

Does this vision in Revelation 7 not inspire our mission? That because we went out of our comfort zones, that because we shared Jesus with someone, they may share this eternal beauty with us in heaven rather than spend an indescribable eternity in hell.

Picture the masses of Thornwood tonight. Pray for them now and have the courage to speak to them of their need of Christ and His saving grace that they too may join with us in this innumerable multitude.

And lastly, the question remains for each of us here tonight. Will you be there? Will you be there? Among that innumerable multitude are our believing grandparents and our believing parents and our believing brothers and sisters and our believing friends.

But unless we ourselves have personally committed our lives to Jesus Christ and put our faith and trust in Him, we will not be there.

[25 : 48] Do we really want an eternity separated from those we love the most? I don't know what heaven will really be like. But I want to be there with my wife and I want to be there with my children.

I can't bear the thought of being apart from them. Neither, I'm sure, can you bear the thought of being apart from those you love the most.

Will you be there holding the hand of your wife in that joyful multitude in heaven? Will you be there standing beside your mother in that joyful multitude in heaven?

Please, Lord, will there be at least one here tonight who's so gripped with this vision and the thought that they, on account of their unbelief, may miss out on this? That they will not wait, but even now at this very moment, turn to Christ and commit themselves to Him as their Savior and Lord?

For on that second, as you commit yourself to Christ and ask Him to be your Savior, your eternal destiny is secured. Your future shall be with this innumerable multitude standing before the throne, dressed in white robes, celebrating Christ's victory.

[27 : 13] Your voices join together with a billion, billion others. Lord, please answer our prayers. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this dramatic vision in Revelation 7. and we thank you, O Lord, for the promise that we'll be there one day.

Our greatest desire, O Lord, is that our children will be there and our grandchildren will be there and all we love will be there.

Our friends will be there. thought that any of those we love should not be there with us. It's too hard to think about, too hard to bear.

And so, Lord, we pray and ask with all our hearts today that you would help us to trust and commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, for in Him there is life eternal and peace infinite, both now and forever.

[28 : 21] Amen.