

# The Church Triumphant

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Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good evening brothers, sisters and friends. Just a reminder of your intimations from this morning. First of all, if you haven't yet, please take a POV report from the back door again, just to remind ourselves.

The shortened version, I promise there's no underhand play, it's a shortened version. I cut out everything that we know ourselves about the logistics of our buildings and everything else.

There's full copies if you want to see that too, you're more than free to, but nothing's been removed or touched. That speaks about the elders, myself or yourselves.

So please do take a copy of that and any questions about the report, please just ask us or discuss with us. We're wanting, as a crack session, even the other night, we're wanting to be as transparent as we can with all these things.

It's important for us that you engage and take a copy and read it. That can be your homework this week. Please be in prayer for us. Donald McKinnon and myself will be at Presbytery, God willing, on Tuesday.

[ 1 : 0 7 ]     Pray for us and pray for the wider Presbytery. Also, God willing, at a Deacon's Court on Wednesday at 7 in the hall. Quite a lot of content that night, mostly stuff in connection to the POV forms, fire safety and all that.

So please be in prayer for that. One other intimation. It's an advanced intimation for Tuesday the 6th.

Tuesday the 6th of February at 7.30pm. An open WFM. We'll announce it again next week. But Tuesday the 6th of February at 7.30pm.

An open WFM. So, brothers, men, we can go along too. In fact, we should go along. It's, God willing, Andrew McKeever telling us about their recent trip around all the churches in Greece.

I've heard part of his travel story and it's fascinating. Genuinely fascinating. So please do attend that and support that evening. So that's Tuesday 6th at 7.30pm.

[ 2 : 1 4 ]     Again, we'll announce it again next week. We're praying, of course, today, especially for Grace Church Leaf. The work that they are doing. The ongoing work. Just an example of the work.

The very building they have in Grace Church Leaf. It's an old Masonic lodge. It was given to them. Bought by them. It was given to them, really. There's a whole host of amazing circumstances.

We had our in-service training. We were a week in that church building. It's an old Masonic lodge. And we spent a lot of time taking away and removing any symbols of the dark history of it.

There's no windows. Everything's blocked off. Long since covered over. It's amazing seeing what was once, of course, a place of much darkness is now being used to share the gospel.

So we pray for them in Grace Church Leaf. Also remembering Free Church missionaries, associates working and living in Turkey. We pray especially for this one ministry couple.

[ 3 : 21 ] They are resident to Turkey. They're from Turkey. And recently their church building burnt down. It was an accidental fire. As far as they know, it wasn't malicious. But pray for them as they look for a new church building.

So Grace Church Leaf and the mission work going on quietly in Turkey. We're here to worship the Lord this evening. We can sing first of all in Sing Psalms and Psalm 47.

Sing Psalms and Psalm 47. That's on page 62 of the church psalm books. Sing Psalms, Psalm 47 on page 62.

All nations, clap your hands and shout. Let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout.

Psalm 47. We can sing the whole psalm to God's praise. All nations, clap your hands and shout.

[ 4 : 33 ] Let joyful cries to God ring out. That was silent, that was silent.

That was silent, that was silent. The Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout.

The house of truth, give out the nations who have been a whole. The Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout.

constitutionalooooong the Greece of the Lamb, which... Rocks in the blood of the Lord Lord is wrath. The Lord by the Senhor of the Holy Week, when the China of the Íous and the ■ instructions in the northwest.

He's dedicated for us He chose. The past, our love, where sheds of joy, the Lord of the Lord, the Lamb is found.

[ 6 : 06 ] Sing this, sing this, to God who's hand, to God, our King, let praise our hand.

For God is in all year, sing songs of praise, to Him alone.

For who's the person come on high, He sits upon His holy throne.

The leaders of the nations come to heal themselves, to heal themselves, to live beyond the shields of hell, and song deeply is the Lord.

Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we gather once more before you, and once more we come worshiping the great and exalted reality that you are God, and there is none other like you.

[ 8 : 12 ] We've sung just now from your word, that all the praise of the nations, that all the gathered praise of all the people you created, is not enough to magnify and glorify the wonder of who you are.

As we've sung again, you are the one who is in full control of all the nations of all creation. Even as we're reminded, and thought together, the boys and the girls, this morning, you are the God who is in full control.

When we look to ourselves, we look to the reality of our lives, we find ourselves at times feeling so helpless, as we find our own private, personal situations, our family situations, work situations, life, wider situations, mounting up on top of us, and we find ourselves ourselves with little to no control over any of it.

Illness of loved ones, family worries, perhaps financial worries, and all the rest of the worries which we find, and which we face day by day.

And we bring all these things this evening, all the worries of this past week, all the burdens and responsibilities of this coming week, in all their shape and form.

- [ 9 : 32 ] And we bring them just now to the throne of grace. We leave them just now with you. We cannot handle them. We cannot deal with them. At times there is almost nothing we can do about them.
- And we come to you. And we come to you. You who are sovereign. You who are glorified. Who have gone up with shouts of joy. You who deserve all the glory of all the ages to come.
- And we confess that in and of ourselves we find so little reason to come. That in and of ourselves we find no way we can come. We come this evening in the finished work of our Saviour.
- For his sake. For his sake. In his power. For his sake. In his power. Covered by his righteousness we come this evening. Those of us who know and who love him. And it is in that reality.
- It is in that hope we come. And we know that we are seen and addressed by you. As sons and daughters. As beloved ones. As faithful servants.
- [ 10 : 35 ] All because of the reality of our Saviour's accomplished work. Help us never to graduate past giving him praise for the reality of his love for us.
- Even as we heard in recent weeks. That you love him. And because we are in him you love us as you love him. That he himself confirmed that to us.
- As he prayed that prayer. That prayer. Where he mentions and brings into the glorious reality. That all who know him. And those who would still bring into the fold.
- That we would know that we are loved as he is loved. Help us to acknowledge that this evening. To know that we are truly loved as sons and daughters. Because we have been brought into the family.
- Adopted. Never to be removed. We have been grafted in. Never to be torn away again. With that we enjoy the full benefits of what it is to be in Christ.
- [ 11 : 42 ] As we heard in the morning the last few weeks. In him we were chosen before time. In him in time we were redeemed. We were set free. We were rescued. We were given new life.
- We became new creatures. We were sealed to the Holy Spirit. That guarantee that we are yours for all time. Never to be removed. What awaits every one of your people here.
- Is the hope and the sure reality of glory. Help us then to serve you. To serve you well in this place. Of all that beautiful theology.
- All that beautiful truth. Help that then to encourage us in our worship. In our praise. We pray once more for North Tulsa. We pray once more for the mission field where you have placed us.
- Help us to be salt and light in this place. Help us in our conduct. To be showing what it is to be known and loved by a Saviour. Forgive us Lord for the times when our actions themselves have betrayed us.
- [ 12 : 45 ] We have acted in ways that are not appropriate. As those who are calling on the name of Jesus. Help us in all that we say. To be bold witnesses. Help us not to be ashamed of the Gospel.
- But to simply. Joyfully. Carefully. Gently. Proclaim the glorious Gospel news. We thank you just now for the ongoing conversations.
- Of your people in this place. As they share the good news week by week. Give us Lord we ask opportunities. Give us we ask opportunities to share that Gospel this week. Lead us to situations where we can naturally and clearly share our hope in Jesus.
- As we ask for these opportunities. We ask you to give us the sense and give us the zeal to lay hold on these chances. And not to let them pass us by.

We ask for the increase of the Gospel in this place. Not for the glory of this ministry. Not for the glory of our congregation. Not for the glory of this denomination.

[ 13 : 53 ] But for your glory. As we pray for your glory. We pray for our brothers and sisters next door this evening. Remember them once more. As they seek to worship you just now. Pray for the one who is over them this evening.

You give him your words to say. We pray for them in their time of vacancy. How difficult a time of vacancy is. Especially a protracted time. As the years come and go.

We ask you to keep them united. And give them that Gospel based hope. The eventual will that in your time. You would send one to lead them. And if that does not take place Lord.

You would give them the strength. To await it out to the end well. We pray for the wider Gospel cause in North Tulsa. That cause which goes across denominations.

Which goes across our own personalities. We pray just now for the Gospel cause. As it were from the Glen all the way to Gary. Gary. For every home that is represented in this place.

[ 14 : 53 ] And every home who has never been near this place. Those who have never prayed for themselves. Those who no one here has ever prayed for. We pray for them this evening. Neighbours perhaps.

Those who have moved into the village in recent years. Who have perhaps kept themselves to themselves. We bring them before you. We ask that they would come. And they would be saved. You have brought them to this place.

A place where the Gospel is still known. To hear the Gospel. Help us then not to be reluctant. Help us then not to be reticent. Help us to be ready to serve you in our homes.

Among our families. In this place. We would again see days of Gospel blessing. And Gospel power. In North Tulsa. We cannot make it happen Lord.

We confess. For all our efforts and all our strivings. We cannot bring the revival of souls. We leave that alone with you. But you have told us in your word. That we must plant that seed.

[ 15 : 53 ] We must water that seed. Therefore give us the strength and the wisdom to do so. Help us to plant that seed of the Gospel. Week after week. In this place and in our own homes.

And around the village. Help us to share the good news of Jesus. To help us to warn of the danger that people are in. And help us then to water that seed.

Help us to grow. And to send. Help us to look upwards and look outwards. And at the same time trusting you. That not one single word of your word is lost.

As a word goes out. It never returns to you. Having not accomplished the purposes. You have set it to accomplish. Let that be our hope and confidence. This new week.

Not in what we see as results. But what we know to be true. That you are building your church in North Tulsa. And we know that's true. Because you still have your people here. As long as we are here.

[ 16 : 55 ] You are building your church. Lord we ask that it would be the process. We have our full hope and faith in. We may not see the result of that growth. For many weeks.

For many months. Indeed many decades. But you will bring it to fruition in your time. We give you thanks as we remember. The many who sat in these pews before us. The brothers and sisters.

Who now worship you in glory. Who join in for worship just now. The church triumphant. We give you thanks for their lives and their witnesses. As we remember once more this evening.

I look forward to our own place in glory. Our own place in heaven. Help us to spend time. Pondering these things. And remembering that you have given us. A great hope.

That all who know Jesus in this life. Will spend eternity with him in the next. But with that. We have the warning. That those who have no care about Jesus. In this life.

[ 17 : 51 ] That he will have no care for them. In the next. Lord help that to be real for us this evening. Help us not to leave here. Satisfied. Unless we have made peace in our souls.

With him. Pray just now for those. Who are not here this evening. But who long to be here. For various reasons. Because of perhaps of the weather.

Those who are kept away for. Health reasons. And ongoing health reasons. Pray just now for those who are. At pain. And in great pain in our bodies. In our minds.

And our minds. Of those just now. Who are going through. Complicated days. And hard days. Those who are. Awaiting news. And who are worried about that news. I pray just now for those who are heavy.

With a heaviness in their heart. And a heaviness in their mind. Because of their own situation. Or perhaps family situations. Alone Lord. Alone Lord. You know the details.

[ 18 : 48 ] You know the details. Pray just now for those. Who can't. Put into words perhaps. The prayers that they have. Who are full of dread. And darkness. Even those of your own number.

Who feel so alone perhaps. Lord we bring them before you. You know the situations. And you alone. The ultimate comforter. We ask you Lord then.

To bless our time together this evening. Help us to. Leave this place. Not just having grown in our. Intellectual knowledge. In our head knowledge. But help us to leave this place. Having grown in our love.

That our theology. We turn to doxology. That what we learn. We turn into praising you. Come this evening. With these words of praise. And adoration.

With all these desires. And cries for help. Confessing sin before you. We have gone against you. So clearly. So evidently. And we know that.

[ 19 : 45 ] At times we feel it. Lord rescue us. From that sin we ask. Remind us of our place. Of perfection and holiness. As we're covered. And cleansed by the sun. Help us then.

Not to make. Assumptions. Help us then. Not to take for granted. That glorious truth. Help us instead. To strive. To serve him. Well.

Forgive us. Our sins. Take away from us. The shame and guilt. Of our sin. As we find it. Placed. Unto our saviour. In his name. And it's for his sake. We ask these many things.

Amen. Let's turn to reading God's word. Turn to the. Final book. In scripture. Revelation. Reading chapter 7. Revelation chapter 7.

Revelation chapter 7. It's on page 968.

[ 20 : 42 ] Page 968. Let's hear the word. Of God. After this.

After this. I saw. Four angels. Standing at the four corners. Of the earth. Holding back. The four winds. Of the earth. That no wind.

Might blow on earth. Or sea. Or against any tree. Three. Then I saw. Another angel. Ascending. From the rising. Of the sun. The seal.

Of the living God. And he called. A loud voice. To the four angels. Who had been given. Power. To harm. Earth. And sea. Saying. Do not harm.

The earth. Or the sea. Or the trees. Until we have sealed. The servants. Of our God. On their foreheads. And I heard. The number of the sealed. A hundred and forty four. Thousand.

- [ 21 : 37 ] Sealed. teaspoons. Twelve thousand. Con■■■■■■■■. From the tribe of. Reform. Twelve thousand. The tribe of. Gad. Twelve thousand. From the tribe.
- of Asher. Twelve thousand. From the tribe. Of Naftali. Twelve thousand. From the tribe. Of Manasseh. Twelve thousand. From the tribe. Of Simeon. Twelve thousand.
- From the tribe. Of Levi. Twelve thousand. From the tribe. of Isleicher. Twelve thousand. From the tribe. Of Zebulun. 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.
- 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 with 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.
- [ 22 : 53 ] 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? 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 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 with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them for any scorching heat.
- For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
- [ 23 : 56 ] Amen. We give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word. Let's sing once more this time from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 84.
- The Scottish Psalter, Psalm 84. This is a psalm which sings of the Christian's journey in this life, making our way home.
- Psalm 84. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 6. How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts to me.
- The tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant, Lord, they be. My first days so longs vehemently. Ye fainst thy courts to see. My very heart and flesh cry out, O living God, for thee.
- Psalm 84, verses 1 to 6. To God's praise. Let's sing verses 1 down to verse 6.
- [ 25 : 10 ] I will bless you, Lord, baby. My thirsty soul does give me Yes, I will see you.
- My very heart, I am O living God for thee.
- Behold the sparrow by death And others well into rest The swallow also of our sin Our Praby's blessed where she stayed her young wants for living O that all I need your hope you are my God and King let

I live by God dwell in the heavenly grace blessed is the man who strength the arm in whose heart God I praise who who has seen that road big as there in do need God bless our souls that may that fall down the poor who are with water hills so for a short time turn back to the chapter we had revelation chapter seven we said in the morning we're spending today looking at heaven from two different angles and we come to the conclusion of two of our short series in the morning we concluded the series of looking what it means to be in Jesus and the reality of the reality of the reality of our union with Jesus and we saw the reality of our union of Jesus forever in glory and we saw the human of Jesus forever in glory and glory.

glory. Well this evening we have the same theme as we come to our chapter here as we've been looking at what is the church. We saw it as a body and we saw last week the mission of the church, why are we here? And this evening we see our future. If in the morning we look to ourselves as individual Christians and perhaps this evening we have a glimpse at our future together. What does the joint future of the church, what is the hope of the church? I know we know this but just in case we forget and often perhaps sometimes we hide behind these words. When I say the future of the church what do we mean? Well not the future of everyone who's attended this place, we know that can't be the case. Not the future of everyone even who calls themselves members of the church.

[ 29 : 27 ] This is the future of everyone who knows and who loves Jesus. I make that distinction because we know ourselves and not everyone who comes to our church building, even those who come their whole lives, sometimes they end that life having never known Jesus themselves. On the flip side, sadly, and we know this, there are some, I don't say this to ourselves, I certainly don't think so, I certainly pray not, but just so aware, there are some of course who look like to be members and who act as if they're members, but privately and secretly their lives tell a different story. Behind closed doors, as it were, they have no love for the Lord. It's all that to say, who is the church? It is every person who knows, who loves, who serves, who calls Jesus their saviour, their king and their friend. So what is the future of the church? Well quite simply we can just look at this short section and see verses 9 down to verse 17 and just see three of the promises for the church in the future. Of course we come to Revelation and we know as we come to Revelation it's a book that is full of symbolism, a book that is full of images that require time and patience and wider understanding. And this is not a study for us this evening perhaps on the imagery of this chapter as a whole. With the Lord's help we will tackle this book one fine day. But for now just focusing very clearly verses 9 down to verse 17. I will say one thing verses 1 down to verse 8 of chapter 7, these are verses that have caused problems for many

Christians. Indeed it's problems which have caused some cults to even have their basis. If you know anything of our friends who follow the belief system of the Job's Witness, the Watchtower Society, the JW's, this is one of their texts and they believe this is the number of those who are going to heaven and what proper heaven and what chapter that living day. Quite clearly our heading here tells us above chapter 7 verses 1 to verse 8 concern, we could say at least in one sense, concern the people of Israel, those who are Jewish believers and that's concerning them. We'll touch on that one day.

In contrast to that we have verse 9 onwards which speaks about the Gentiles, it broadens out the category and we see that from verse 9. This great multitude. So what are the three promises we have in these verses? First of all we have a promise of a future together. Then the promise of a future of freedom and joy and a future with the Lamb. So first of all then, a future together. Looking at verse 9 as we start.

After this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation and through all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb. A future together.

A great multitude. A great multitude. When you think of heaven and here we're imagining thinking of the thinking of the new heavens and the new earth. This is us now as we are forever together.

[ 33 : 32 ] Do you imagine there to be a great number of people? A large number of people? Quite often you'll see, I'll hear perhaps descriptions of heaven that seems to be quite sparsely populated.

Plenty of people but not a great number. Well that's not what we see in scripture is it? That's not a promise God gave to Abraham as the stars in the sky, as the amount of sand below him. That is the image we have, an innumerable number. Now not for a second are we saying that all are saved. We know that is not the case.

We never preach that, we never think that. But what we would say is there are far more saved, and I think we ever would begin to imagine or understand there will be a great number in heaven.

Now that great number brings in of course all the people of the Lord from the very start to the very end. For all the millions and billions of people who have lived on this earth and from that number all those who trust in the Lord. Before our Saviour was born, before the incarnation, all those who trusted forward to the coming Messiah, all those who trusted in God that he would send a Saviour, they will be in glory.

Those at Christ's coming who believed in him, they'll be in glory. And every one of us since the coming of Christ, look back to his coming, his life, death, resurrection, his finished work, all of us included into that.

[ 35 : 12 ] Every single person who loves the Lord. And with that others and others and others, we can't begin to imagine. We think of ourselves, our own numbers in this pew since this church is built.

Think of every believer in our island, everyone who loved the Lord in our island, since the gospel first came in its fullness to the island. Across the nation, across Scotland, across the UK, across the Western world, starting of course in the Eastern world.

The whole of Africa, that whole continent which was once full of believers, is now still full. In fact, one of the fastest growing corners of the church is the whole continent of Africa.

Africa. In 50, 60 years' time, they will be where the centre of believers are. Not the West, Africa and the East. All the millions of believers in these countries.

We're heading towards a future where we join together with a great multitude. That should encourage us. And what's even more encouraging is we're still here this evening around God's word, worshipping together as a church family. And as long as we are here, that great multitude, its number is not yet reached. There are more to join in. Until the end comes, there are more to take part. There are more to join into that membership, that multitude. As we keep praying for our loved ones to come to faith, those in our homes, those around us in Tolstah, as we pray for them, we pray and we believe fully that they will join us in this great multitude one day.

[ 37 : 00 ] A great number. A great number. But also note the makeup of this great number. Every tribe, every nation, every language. All tribes, all peoples, all languages. What a glorious image of the church.

Now I know we ourselves, I haven't found this at all. I praise the Lord we haven't found this. As a congregation, we're quite outward looking. I have heard plenty of times us praying for churches across the world and I praise the Lord for that. It's a good thing that we are. But this is the reminder for us and we all need the reminder at times. The church is not limited to Tolstah. The church is not limited to Western Isles Presbytery, nor Scotland, nor the UK. As we said, the church really is expanding in places and in ways that hasn't even been understood fully yet. Here's an incredible thing that there are places in this world where the church is taking a hold, where the gospel is spreading, and we haven't yet numbered that spread. There aren't people there yet acknowledging that fully. In other words, in the years to come, the church will grow in ways and places we have no understanding of. We're seeing that again across



Africa, but really across the East and the Central Asia. All of us stand countries there where there's so much oppression, we word this carefully, so much oppression, but yet the church is growing.

Malcolm, instead of us global, has spent a fair amount of time in certain countries there because the church is growing and we have a bigger need for more support. God is building his church amongst nations and tribes. And we saw it, didn't we, a few months ago, last year now, as we heard from our brothers and SGA as they shared that there are people, tribal nomadic people, who are being dropped radials, receiving radials, and being saved as they hear the gospel. There are tribes, traveling nomadic tribes, who at this moment are wandering around these great plains and are praising the Lord as we praise him and our brothers and sisters with us. And one day, from North Tolstada, from Western Isles, all the way to the great plains out there, to tribes and languages and people groups we have little understanding of, who have fragments of the gospel, but that is enough for them to believe fully, we will be together in glory. As an example, the church is worldwide.

And just think, it's every tribe, language and nation from the start until the end. There will be every shape and size and shade of humanity and glory, and it will be glorious. It will be glorious.

[ 40 : 16 ] A great number, all the colour and shape and size of humanity. But note where we are. We are together, in verse 9, around the throne, standing before the throne. Right now, we are separated by distance, by language, by culture. You see that. I read awful reports of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and Russia.

And on both sides, you have evangelical, gospel-loving Christians who are being called up to fight. And quite graphically, they are there shooting at one another. And they are brothers in the Lord.

And yet, in this world, they are divided by nationality, by politics, by world situation. And yet, in glory, they are together.

There is no divide of this wall and our friends next door, our brothers and sisters next door. There is no more walls between us. We have been divided since the 1890s onwards. No more divide in glory.

We ourselves, which are our family divides to our shame. Family church divides. Brothers and sisters in the faith who have fallen out. All that nonsense gone in glory.

[ 41 : 43 ] All because we are together as one church at the throne. We are united, not by common history, not by culture. We are united instead by our Saviour, fully and forever.

And what does our future together look like? Verse 10. It's a future of loud praise. And crying out with a loud voice that the church, the gather people are saying and praising salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. We are praising loudly. It's a future of the church. We are togetherness. We are together with one voice. We sing and we shout for joy and of praise.

You think to your whole time in church and you think to the most glorious, uplifting time of sung worship you've enjoyed, perhaps in a church building, that time when it feels as if you're almost in glory.

For me actually, I can say this now, it's been a year now, it actually was in this building. It was just the sheer makeup of it. It was the night of the ordination. And of course I was sitting right there where Jimurdo is. And as the congregation started singing, just for sheer number, it was a wall of sound that hit us. And the minister commented on it, it's just a wall of sound. And I felt it almost hit me, quite literally.

Honestly, that's 200 people, whatever it was that night. What is that compared to a thousand people in a church somewhere?

[ 43 : 37 ] What is that compared to the immeasurable, innumerable numbers in glory, all singing together, praising the Lamb? That is what we look forward to. One voice in our glorified bodies, still ourselves, that we said this morning, in all the ways we are us. But perfected. No more sin, no more nonsense, no more shame, no more guilt, nothing else driving us back. Just love for our Lord. Just our undivided worship of Him. And we raise our voices towards Him. A future together. It's also a future of freedom and of joy. Verse 14, we see that given to us. And John speaks, I said to him, to the elder, to the man, speaking of John, the man's asked, who are these? And the elder answers, these are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Taking in verses 14 down to verse 17, that whole section there. A future of peace, of joy. See, this is a future of those who are no longer involved in suffering. We're away from suffering.

There's a great discussion here for us one day, but just in short, those who come out of the great tribulation, there is specific meaning for that, but there's also a wider meaning. The specific meaning as a servant, as a servant, is a wider meaning. This takes in the whole suffering body of Christ, from Christ's ascension until now. Until the end, I should say. The tribulation church.

In other words, every Christian who has suffered, every Christian who has gone through pain and misery, and there are Christians, and we know them, who have gone through the closest thing to hell they will ever experience. Slowly tortured and killed for the sake of Christ. Watch our loved ones killed in front of them for the sake of Christ. If that is happening, and we know it happens, it happened in history. Of course, in the mornings, we're careful, but this evening, brothers and sisters and friends, let's not be reticent here. There are Christians in history who have suffered great things. Satan has done everything to try and stop the gospel. There are many things about Emperor Nero which have been exaggerated. There are some things which have not been. There are some things which we know for a fact he did because of the horror of his friends and of his enemies who recorded it. There are Christians there in the early church, skinned alive, kept alive, stuck in a pole, covered in tar, lit on flames. That's the reality. Emperor Nero's palace, the road up to it almost, was lit up by burning torches of Christians. There has been evil and misery and death. And bear in mind, when John wrote this from Patmos, he is writing this to Christians who have heard that, who have seen that, who have escaped from that kind of level of just horror. And John, in his vision, he's told to tell the church, one day there is no more suffering. It is those who have what? Who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They've come out from the great tribulation. They've left all the chaos and turmoil and heartbreak. And now they've been washed and washed clean. Out from sin.

The sin of the world, but also their own sin. And here we have a beautiful image that as they wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, they come out glistening, gleaming white, not red, not stained.

[ 47 : 43 ] As the blood of the Lamb, as the representation here is, the image here is, as they bathe themselves and dunk their sin-stained, pain-stained clothes of this world into the blood of the Lamb.

They are now wearing forever the perfection, the gleaming white robes of peace, of joy. That is the image we have here of our future brothers and sisters. No more sin. No more wrath.

And look where they are. They're in the presence of God. Verse 15. And note verses 15 down to verse 17. See the structure changes. I don't know if it does in the KJV. Perhaps it does. I didn't check. I shall check.

But I need to see the structure changes. Verses 15 down to verse 17. It goes to a narrow structure. There's a reason for that, clearly. Verses 15 down to verse 17. It's a form of poetry. It's a form of song.

This is a song of a new creation. In Greek it almost rhymes. And it describes for us what it is we will see.

[ 49 : 04 ] When I say describe what we'll see, we mean that the symbols, the images, they give us a sense. They give us a sense. We're in the presence of God. Verse 15.

And therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. We're in God's presence forever.

New heavens and new earth. There is not one dark area in terms of sin in the new heavens and new earth. As we spend eternity roaming and existing and growing in the new heavens and new earth, we spend every second of it in God's presence.

And here's a glimpse, quite beautifully, really, at how we know that heaven won't just be a term of praise in terms of standing there praising.

The clue is actually in verse 15. We have more than clues, but just for this evening. They serve him day and night in his temple. What in chapter 21?

[ 50 : 14 ] We see that there is no temple. The temple is the Lord God. In the midst of him. How do these two things go together? Well, quite simply, the whole of the new heavens and the new earth is the temple.

The Lord is there. There is a whole of the new creation. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we are serving God in his temple. It takes us right back to Eden.

We covered this before in the prayer meetings. Eden, of course, we said, was the first temple where God met with man. And everywhere in the temple of Eden, they were in the temple of Eden.

As Adam and Eve, as they tended, as they looked after the garden, as they were told to do, they served in temple worship. And the same for us in the new heavens and the new earth.

We have all eternity. As we explore new heavens and new earth. New creation. We praise and glorify God every second of it.

[ 51 : 20 ] We also find ourselves in eternal shelter. He who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. It ties into what we had last Thursday.

Speaking of Psalm 90. And he won the shelter of the evil one. The shelter as the evil attacks us. The shelter that God gives us. As he overshadows us.

Here he is one eternal shelter over us. No more fiery arrows to get to us. No more attacks. No more hunger and thirst.

No more suffering. And quite simply summarised for us. Repeated here for us the verse we have. The end of verse 17.

No more tears. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. A future of hope and joy.

[ 52 : 17 ] And finally and quite simply. A future with the Lamb. Brings us back up to verse 9. We see this verse told to us.

A future with the Lamb. All the tribes and nations. We stand before our King. We stand before our brother.

And note what we do as we stand there. From all tribes. Verse 9. 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. We stand before the Lamb. First and foremost in victory. The palm leaves.

If you catch your mind back. You think back to. As Jesus enters in. Riding on the donkey. What did people throw? They threw their coats on the ground.

[ 53 : 12 ] Symbolize. The entry of a king. And they held in their hands. What? Palm leaves. Why? Because in the culture of the day. As a triumphant king. A triumphant warrior.

Entered your town. Or entered the city. The palm leaves. Were a sign of victory. Of flourishing. Of growth. And as you held these palm leaves.

And you waft them. And you waved them. You were just saying. That you are now going to enjoy. The victory. That the king. The warrior. Has secured. For you and your people. And here as we face.

The Lamb in glory. Church. We will hold on. As aware. To these palm leaves. And we will be waving them. Before him. Again. It's symbols. It's symbols.

It's imagery. It tells us in short. We stand before him in victory. We stand before him in victory. We heard it this morning. That final victory.

[ 54 : 07 ] Death. Where is your what? Sting. Where is the victory of the grave? Our saviour has the victory. That is our future.

Also note what takes place. In our future before the Lamb. We spend eternity. Praising. The Lamb. Verses 11.

And. Verse. 12. Not only do we engage. In heavenly praise. But note we also. Will hear.

Heavenly praise. And all the angels. Were standing around the throne. Around the elders. And the four living creatures. They all fell on their faces. Before the throne. 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. Again. That rhymes.

[ 55 : 05 ] It's a song. It's being sung. I can't think of the beauty of our voices at times. And. And. And. And think of the beauty of the song of heaven.

As they sing. This song. And the other songs we see in Revelation. These songs of. Of praise and adoration. Of praise and adoration. Of singing of the worth of the lamb.

We have a future ahead of us. Hearing. Not just our own voices praising. But the praise of all the legions of angels. The praise of the living creatures.

That all of creation order is now perfect. And all creation now sings and joys and praises together. Forever. I love that.

Image of creation. That the stars are placed. That's all the. What is it? All the sons of God. That were sung for joy. The glorious thing.

[ 56 : 06 ] That on creation itself. The angels are praising. When creation. When the Lord placed the stars. And created time and space. The angels praised him. Now we see.

That for all time. In the new heavens. In the new earth. The angels keep. Praising him. There is no more darkness. No more distraction.

We will leave this place. We will go home this evening. We will hopefully. Remember parts of it. We will forget. Most of it. As we all do. We are only human. We will start our new week this week.

And probably this evening. Or tomorrow. Something will come up. We will be faced with something. And we will be. Right back into reality. Dealing with something. Working through something.

And we perhaps lose sight. As to. The glory of our. Praising the Lord. We will think about. New heavens and new earth. Nothing arises. Nothing comes up to distract us.

[ 57 : 07 ] As we live. And serve. And exist. And cultivate. And whatever else we might be doing. In the new heavens. And the new earth. We do it all.

Whilst praising the Lord. All that we do. Is an offering of praise to him. Without sin. Without stop. Quite beautifully.

And quite simply. It ends in verse 17. The lamb. In the midst of the throne. Will be their shepherd. And he will guide them. To springs.

Of living water. Church. In the midst. In the midst. Church. This is our future. We have a future. Of a lamb. In our midst.

We will see him. As. He is. In our new resurrection. Bodies. We heard this morning. Never to decay. Never to feel pain again.

[ 58 : 04 ] Mentally. Mentally. Or physically. Or spiritually. It will be there. Before him. Time. Without end. And note the beautiful image here. The swapping of roles.

The lamb. Is our shepherd. The bringing together. Of all that he is. In this life. He shepherds us. He leads us.

But note also. The new heavens. The new earth. He still shepherds us. He still leads us. We still need him. And where does he lead us to? He guides us.

Through springs. Of living water. In other words. Quite beautifully. Because he is there. And because from him. Springs living water. We are with him. And we drink.

Of that living water. In other words. Nothing will stop. Our unity. Of Jesus. Our morning series. We are reminded that. We are united together. With him. But we are always united to him.

[ 58 : 59 ] With that veil of darkness. That veil of separation. We saw in the Song of Solomon. A few weeks ago. There is always that gap. In us and him. But the new heavens.

And the new earth. There is no gap. All that is gone. We are perfectly. In the presence. Of our perfect saviour. Nothing to move.

Remove us. Or remove us. Nothing but praise. Nothing but new heavens. And new earth. And our new bodies. Worshipping our lamb. Together with brothers and sisters. Of every tribe.

And language. And colour. And culture. And story. And there we are together. All topped off. With a reminder. Our God will wipe away.

Every tear. From our eyes. Church. That is our future. That is what it is. We are heading towards. We are an hour closer to nothing.

[ 59 : 56 ] We were. When we started. Our worship together this evening. Every minute. We are an eternity. Closer towards it. And the great glorious hope.

And truth is. Of the Christians here. We have already begun this. In one sense. We are already there. Of course.

We are not there physically. Spiritually. We are still very much tied to the earth. We know that. But our saviour has gone before us. And he is doing what? He has made. A home for us.

Prepared. A place for us. And one day soon. He will take us to be home. With him. And the old. Is rolled away.

And when you. Is given. When you heavens. And the new earth. Are spoken into existence. By our saviour. By our God. By our king. We then spend eternity with him.

[ 60 : 53 ] In that place. In the morning. We give a solemn. Question. And a solemn look. And. I assured. I assure again.

There is no joy in this. There is no joy. But the truth is. And we know it. The truth is. And we all know where it is going. The truth is. That all we said this evening.

It applies to those. Who know the Lord. All the promises. Of verses 9 to verse 17. Only apply. Are only the future of those. Who know and who love the Lord. There is.

No. Entry. To glory. There is no entry. To any of these promises. There is no hope. Of having your tears. Wiped away. There is no living.

Water of life. For you. In glory. In the new heavens. In the new earth. If. You do not. First. Now. In time.

[ 61 : 49 ] In this world. Drink. Of the water. He offers you. If you won't. Now. Turn your face. Towards Jesus.

Then he won't. Wipe. Your tears. Away from you. In the future. If you don't. Now. Come. And have him. As king. And lord. And saviour. You will never.

See. The new heavens. And the new earth. You will never. See. Anything other. But the old earth. As you're raised up. From the grave.

You heard this morning. After that. I lost eternity. You know it. And you've heard it before. I said this morning. You know. I can't.

Frighten you into glory. I can't. Harangue you in. I can't. Bump the pulpit. And make it work. That's not how it works. Perhaps I might be able to scare you.

[ 62 : 47 ] I might be able to shout at you a bit. It won't save you. You have to come. Yourself. And know yourselves.

What it is to have the future hope. With every Christian here this evening. That we have before us. The glorious hope. Of a future. Together.

A future of peace. And joy. And a future. Spent. With. The lamb. Let's bear our heads now. A word of prayer. Lord as we come to this conclusion.

Of this hour. This lord's day. We thank you once more. For the gift of your word. As we think. Just so briefly. Of the future reality. That awaits us. As your people.

Lord help us. To be faithful. Help us as your people. To serve you well. Understanding that. Heaven is not. A reward. For good service. But heaven. Is a gift.

[ 63 : 42 ] You give all your people. Who you love. A gift. You have given your people. Who have come. To believe. In Christ. As their only hope. And their only help.

We ask that. That be the case. For all. Here this evening. But not one person. Here. Would not be joined. With us. In that great. And final day. As we enter into. The new creation.

We enter in. Together. As friends. As brothers. As sisters. As brothers. Not one person. Here. Would be left out. Help us Lord. Then. To turn to Jesus.

We ask you. Give us time. To do so. Help us. To remember. Our loved ones. In prayer. Those who as of yet. Have no concern. At all. For themselves. Or for their eternity. Lord. We ask you.

Give us strength. To keep remembering them. And keep them in prayer. Help us. The rest of this evening. To give you praise. And honour. And glory. Thank you. Once more Lord. For your servant.

[ 64 : 39 ] Who leads. The worship. Lord. You give us. The voice to sing. As you understand. That we sing. These words. As we do so. We join in. The voices.

Of the saints. In glory. As they worship you. Let's call these things. In and through. And for Jesus. In his precious name's sake. Amen. We can close.

By singing to God's praise. In the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 102. Psalm 102. The second version. Of the psalm.

Psalm 102. The second version. Of the psalm. And verses 23. Down to verse. 28. 23 to the end. Psalm 102.

Verse 23. It's on page. 368. Psalm 102. Verse 23. Of course. This is a psalm. Which sings. Of God's. Eternal nature.

[ 65 : 38 ] And. As Hebrews. Shows us. This is a psalm. And these verses. Are verses. Which speak. Of Jesus. My strength. He weakened. In.

The way. My days. Of life. He shortened. My God. Would take me not away. In the midtime. Of my days. I said. And here. We sing. About our saviour. By years.

Throughout. All ages. Last. Of old. Now hast established. The earth's foundation. Firm and fast. Thy mighty hands. The heavens.

Have made. We can sing. Verses 23. Down to verse 28. To God's praise. My path.

My strength. He weakened. Can. Turn. The way. My. Days. Of life.

[ 66 : 34 ] Is short. Ten. Own. My God. May God take me, God, thou wilt, In which I know my days I stand.

But here tonight, all ages last, Hope on the last established end, The earth's ambition,  
Where man fast, Thy mighty hands, The hands of me, With heaven shall the darkness do,  
But thou shalt heaven or endure, As best your sun shall change them slow,

And they shall all be changed soon.

But from all changes, The earth are free, I am the spirit to last for this, Thy servant's hand,  
Let's say to thee, He established shall before thee stay.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, And the love of God the Father, And the fellowship  
of the Holy Spirit, With you now and forevermore. Amen.