***A Great Multitude Waving Palm Branches

RV133-02***

We now begin a new session in Revelation 7:9-17. Our subject is the tribulation converts. This is segment number one.

The apostle John, as you remember, has seen four angels in this chapter who are holding back what are described as the four winds which are about to be turned loose by God, which will cause terrific devastation in the world of nature. This destruction by natural forces in the tribulation era is delayed by God. He holds the angels back from turning the winds loose until a special group of Jewish evangelists has been raised up; that is, people who were not believers when the tribulation began, become believers. Ultimately, there are 144,000 of them gathered from each of the basic 12 tribes of Israel. These witnesses preach the gospel of the kingdom to a vast number of gentiles, and a multitude of those gentiles, as well as Jews, are saved. The society of the tribulation world despises these born again gentiles. It has no hesitancy in killing them in order to silence their testimony. So, this passage reveals to us that there is an enormous number of martyrs who die for their faith in that tribulation period.

**The 144,000**

John now sees a new scene in heaven which deals with this regenerated, martyred multitude of gentiles. So, in verse 9, we read, "And after this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude." "After this" is a reference to a new scene, just as in verse one of this chapter, you had, "And after these things I saw." These are kind of code words that indicate that a new aspect of the vision is being entered. The first observation, at the beginning of chapter 7, introduced by these words "after this," was the vision of 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

Now the second aspect of this vision in chapter 7, introduced here by the same words "after this" in verse 9, are going to center on the vision of this multitude of gentile converts. So, he says, "After this, I be held." The Greek word for beheld is one we've had many times: "horao." This is the word for an overall panoramic view of the scene in God's throne room in heaven. This is aorist tense, at the point when John sees this vast multitude of gentiles who now come into focus of his vision. It is active. He actually sees these people himself. We have a statement of fact.

Then, the next word "lo" is the Greek word "idou." The word "idou" is a verb, and it is used to call our attention to something dramatic that is about to happen. In this case, it's in the middle voice, and it's calling John's attention, for his personal benefit, to observe something here. The mood is imperative. It's a command to John to pay attention very carefully.

**A Great Multitude**

So, the idea is, John says, "And after this, there before me, lo and behold, what should I see but a great (meaning, a very large numerical number of a) multitude." The Greek word is "ochlos." This word simply refers to a large gathering of people. It refers specifically to the gentile martyrs of the tribulation era – people whom the 144,000 evangelists led to the Lord, but who were then killed because of their faith. They are referred to a little later, in verse 14 of this chapter, where we read, "These are they who came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

This crowd of humanity, which is stretching out in John's vision from God's throne in all directions, joins the 24 elders who are seated on their thrones, representing the church; the living creatures, the honor guard standing around God's throne; and, the multitude of angels, all of which we have referred to back in chapters 4 and 5. All of these beings are still in heaven. They're still on the scene.

So, after this, switching to a new scene: "I beheld, and lo, a large, enormous number of people, which," he said, "no man (nobody) could (that is, was able) to number." You simply could not count them. The word "number" is the word "arithmeo." You can see that this word for numerical computation is where we get our English word "arithmetic." It's aorist tense, as John looks at this whole scene. It's active voice. John personally can't count them. And it's infinitive mood because that's God's purpose here – to give John a great insight into how many people are going to be saved during the millennium.

Now, whatever number have been saved over the centuries, since the day of Pentecost, an enormous number are going to be saved in the tribulation when people really know that the chips are down; their lives are on the line; and, they have come into sensing the reality of the Word of God, and the reality of the claims of Jesus Christ, in spite of the fact that the New Age leaders will be riding high for a while at that particular time.

**Of All Nations**

So, John sees this vast number of people which nobody is capable of numbering, stretching in all directions. These are basically gentiles, in contrast to 144,000 evangelists. Then he gives us the specific categories from which these gentiles come from. We see that they are a great multitude made up of people from all over the earth. For he says, "Of all;" that is, indicating from the population of the whole world. First, he says, "Of all nations." That's the Greek word "ethnos." That is a word that we basically translated as "gentile." It refers here to national political entities (to national groups). The apostle John says that we have here, in this great multitude, people from every nation on the face of the earth. Of course, salvation is not restricted to any one because of the nation in which he was born.

Through the centuries, God has raised up a client nation to be his specific agent of evangelism to the world; that is, a nation is put on the face of the earth; it is brought to the enlightenment of the gospel; and, upon that nation, God places the responsibility of being the communicating voice to all the other nations of the world. God makes it possible for them to be in a commanding position to be listened to; to have a voice that people can hear; and, to give them the means of executing financially that mission. Through the centuries, there has been such an agent. The responsibility of the client nation is to maintain the divine institutions relative to government; that is, to preserve freedom of peoples' volition; to preserve the marriage relationship; to preserve the family order of authority; and, also to preserve a nation as a national entity, sovereign and independent.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of a client nation to proclaim the gospel – to tell the nations of the world how people can go to heaven. They are, furthermore, to teach the full council of the Word of God – that council that we call the doctrines of Scripture. They are, in short, to make a major effort to send out missionaries. That's the responsibility of the client nation.

From about the year 1,500 B.C. to the year 70 A.D., the nation of Israel was that particular client nation, and was responsible for evangelism among the gentiles. As time went by, Israel increasingly failed in this responsibility. She broke down in a variety of ways in these duties and these characteristics which are required of God of a client nation. The consequence was that, in time, she was removed from that privileged position. The Jews, of course, were fully capable of executing this kind of a mission as a client nation of God – a voice of communication. They had a superior culture in the ancient world simply because they had the Word of God upon which they based their culture. Any nation that bases its culture upon the principles of the Word of God is going to be strong and superior to other nations around about it.

The Jews became arrogant over their superiority so that what happened was, instead of saying we have a great opportunity for an outreach to the gentiles, they looked down their nose at the gentiles, and began referring to all gentiles by the term "dog." In the ancient world, a dog was not a little sweet puppy that you take and cuddle, and that you play with, and that you feed every day, and that you run around the yard with. In the ancient world, dogs were scavengers. They were loathsome, disgusting creatures, so it was a much greater insult to call a person a dog than it is today. It's not a very nice thing to say today, but in the ancient world, it was really an enormous insult. So, the Jews referred to gentiles regularly as dogs. They were indifferent to evangelizing gentile nations.

Of course, we have a classic example of that in the Bible, in the case of Jonah, who absolutely refused to go to the city of Ninevah. He despised those Assyrian dogs. He didn't want anything to do with them. It was only when God forced him, through the very traumatic experience of washing him out a little bit, that he finally decided that he better go and talk to the gentile dogs. And the response, as you know, in that case, was tremendous. It saved the nation for another 125 years because it got back on track with the Word of God.

The Jews, in general then, actually failed in the work of missions. And worse than that – they didn't care. The result was that they were terminated as the client nation of God. Various groups were raised up by God over the centuries. When we get to the 19th century (the 1800s), the nation of England was the great client nation, and it was under the leading of the people of the British Empire that the great progress was made in missionary outreach. Today, we may rightly say that the United States is that client nation whose responsibility is to evangelize the world. Of course, we have been the backbone: the primary financier of world missions; the primary supplier of missionaries; and, the primary supplier of the backing for missionary enterprise. But all that is changing. The United States, as it has drifted away from the anchor point of the Word of God, is rapidly itself heading for national discipline, because it has abandoned the Bible as God's Word to man, which man must have to survive.

The consequence is that we may hope to resist that a deterioration in one way or another, and we should. And we may hope to have a holding action where we hold back the consequences, as Jonah did for Ninevah. In time, the nation will be brought down.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in short, atoned for the sins of all nations. Therefore, every nation on the face of the earth is entitled to hear the gospel. In the tribulation, these Jewish evangelists, though they are hated by these gentile nations, will (because they have been immortalized by God – their lives are secure – they cannot be killed) devote themselves to reaching the gentile nations. And they will have to do this without the normal support system that missionaries have when they go out into the field today.

**From All Kindreds**

So, one of the great groups that John sees, as he runs his eye around this vast multitude of people who have been killed because of their faith in the tribulation, is that he finds that they are from every nation on the face of the earth. Then he says, "He also sees that from all kindreds. The Greek word for "kindreds" is the word "phile." "Phule" refers to a group of people who are related by kinship or by habitation, and we would generally refer to them as "a tribe." It refers to the concept of one's race. Again, as evangelism sees no barriers to nations, so evangelism sees no barriers to race. There is no racial prejudice in the gospel. The racial prejudice that exists simply expresses arrogance rather than impersonal, "agape" love as God's ambassadors.

The Lord Jesus Christ clearly demonstrated that He had no prejudice toward somebodies racial background. This was demonstrated very clearly in the case of the Samaritan woman, who was not only of a different race, but of one that the Jews despise, because Americans were half-Jews and half-gentiles. They were half-breeds, and the Jews looked down upon them almost as much as they looked down upon the gentile dogs. Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ fully met this woman's need with the gospel message, and the salvation that she needed.

Then, as John looks around, he not only sees all gentile nations represented, and all races of people represented, but he uses the word "all peoples." The Greek word is "laos." This refers to social rank and categories: the masses of people, in distinction from the rulers; the rich people in contrast to the poor people; the educated people, in contrast to the uneducated; and, the cultured, in contrast to the uncouth and crude. It refers to all of these various social levels. There again is no prejudice in the Word of God concerning one's social standing.

James 2:8-9, you will remember, explicitly warn against such social rank prejudice: "If you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures (the law of "agape" love), you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well. But if you have respect of persons, you commit sins, and are convicted of the law as transgressors." The Scripture warns us against dealing with people in terms of their spiritual need on the basis of their social standing. And this is a very easy thing for churches to do. Who wants to deal with poor people who can't help us to pay the bills? But this word "laos" says that all social standings and categories are eliminated. I know quite a few of you here tonight breathed a sigh of relief because of that. The gospel is for all levels of society, because all are equally sinners. Whether you're a down-and-outer or an up-and-outer, you're all lost. Therefore, whatever your social standing is, you still need the gospel message. John sees that all categories of people receive the gospel message.

Then he sees another category. And all of these are God's way of pointing out that it's the whole world of humanity that's included in this gospel outreach. And that is the word "tongues." The Greek word is "glossa." "Glossa" refers to a spoken language in the human race. The gospel is to be transmitted in the spoken languages of the human race. For this reason, it is necessary for us to reach people, whatever their language may be. Even if a person speaks with a foreign accent, we do not reject people like that as people often do. Just because you may speak English with a foreign twang does not eliminate you as being an object to receive the gospel. Of course, you see why it is necessary to do the translation work that we do, because evangelism seeks to communicate the gospel in the native language of the people. That's the most effective way of reaching an audience. So, translation work is necessary.

So, it's clear from this that every human being in the world beyond the age of accountability needs to be born again. That's the significance of the fact that the Greek uses the word "all" ("pas"), and then it breaks it down into these various categories of human beings. It's God's way of saying that everybody on the face of the earth needs to hear the gospel – for the simple reason that only Christianity offers a means for securing the spiritual birth that produces the absolute righteousness that a person needs in order to go to heaven. That can only be achieved through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6, as you remember, says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." Well, is a Jew, who rejects Jesus Christ, going to go to heaven then, if only through Christ you can go to heaven? No. But they don't like to hear about Jesus Christ. Should we avoid speaking to Jews about Christ? Obviously, from the Scriptures we've read, they're included in those who need it. The Muslims do not look upon Jesus Christ as God, and they do not look upon Him as God's main prophet. Should we offend them by telling them that unless they receive Christ as Savior, they will not go to heaven?

So, throughout all religions and throughout all nations, there is this issue of pressing the Bible way of salvation, which is summed up in Christianity, which is *the* only way. There are many people in the liberal realm that say that missionaries are a terrible thing. Here are these people out here in the jungles of Africa. They're having a wonderful life. They have their own culture. They eat worms, and they caterpillars, and they're covered with sores, and they have a high mortality rate in their infants, and they starve from time to time, and they kill each other off. But it's their culture and it's their way of doing things, and we shouldn't come in and disrupt them, and tell them that God is not pleased with them. But the Word of God says that that is exactly what everybody must know. It is not uncommon, even for certain people who are Christian leaders, to suggest that that should not be done – that we should not be telling people in other cultures that what they have ,religiously, is second-rate, and that it is not the thing that is going to count with God. The truth of the matter is that all other religions and all other approaches to God are false. They are rejected by God, and those who pursue those approaches will be taken into the lake of fire. And we have to tell people all over the world that fact.

In Acts 4:12, we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." What is that name? It's the name "Jesus Christ." All the religions of the world do not lead to the same mountain top of salvation. That is the liberal viewpoint – that, after all, people have their different religious viewpoints; their different religious ways; and, their ways of approaching God, but it's all going to that same God. It's like a mountain. There are different roads to get up to the top, but it's all going to end up at the top. That's not true.

Proverbs 14:12 tells you what is true. It says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." All these pagan non-Christian roads to the top of the mountain of salvation are roads that lead to death. Therefore, every culture; every civilization; and, every group of people on the face of the earth need to be told the gospel message.

1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus." He alone is the one that can take you into heaven. Without the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't have a chance. The whole world, therefore, needs the ministry of Christian missionaries. Local religious beliefs around the world are not just as good as Christianity. They're all inferior. Of course, in a disoriented society, that is anathema.

The only salvation system in the universe that works, if the Bible is true, is the one which is a work of God on the cross in Jesus Christ, and which is given as a grace gift to the human beings who are willing to accept it, apart from any doing on the part of those human beings. Ephesians 2:8-9, therefore, says, "Four by grace (a gift system) you are saved through faith, and that faith is not of yourselves (it too is a gift of God), not of works, lest any man should boast." So, you cannot work your way into heave, and all other religious systems are based upon human effort.

This is the gospel. This is the good news which the tribulation evangelists will be proclaiming. So, all the people on the face of the earth are going to hear the gospel. And the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, you may remember, is contingent upon the fact that the gospel of the kingdom (the gospel of Jesus Christ coming as the Messiah King of the whole world), and the Second Coming of Christ is going to be limited by that gospel message being delivered all over the world. The rapture is not restricted or restrained by anything relative to the gospel, but it says that until this gospel of the kingdom is preached through all the world, that Second Coming will not take place. It is these 144,000 who are going to do that job. That specifically is what is being described here in the book of the Revelation – the progress of those evangelists in proclaiming to every nation and to every group of people on the face of the earth.

So verse 9 John says, "Take notice. I beheld a new scene (a switch of direction), a huge multitude of people. They're dead now. They once were alive on earth. They have been murdered, and they are now in heaven. And there are so many that it's just not possible to count them. They come from all over the world, from people everywhere in every strata of society. He observes that they are standing. The word "standing" is the Greek word "histemi." This word describes the multitude of saved gentiles in a standing posture. This multitude has now moved into the throne room scene, and has joined the people that are already there: the elders on their 24 thrones, representing the church; the angels – the special angels – the living creature; and, so on. They are standing here. This is perfect tense. They're in this position, standing before the throne of God, because of a past martyrdom that they experienced. It's active. It's their personal experience, as saved the gentiles standing there in God's presence. It is participle in mood. It is a spiritual principle. These are standing before the Father's throne.

They are not part of the church. The church is already in heaven, represented by those 24 elders. They are standing specifically, he says, "Before." The word "before" is this Greek word "enopios." "Enopios" actually means face-to-face (in the presence). So, these people are right there in the presence of the "thronos." We have had that word several times: "The 'thronos' of the Lamb." The word "Lamb" is the "arnion;" that is, they're standing before the throne, referring to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, who is now seated with the Father sharing His throne. They stand in the presence of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, sharing the Father's throne.

**Clothed**

These people are specifically said to be: "Clothed with" something very dramatic. The word is "periballo." The word "periballo" literally means "to throw something around yourself," like you would throw a cloak around your shoulders. It is translated "to be clothed with." These people are clothed with something which is described as "white" in color, which is the biblical color for righteousness. They have a very special kind of garment that they have thrown around themselves. It is called a "stole." A "stole" refers to a stately long garment, reaching to the feet, and perhaps even having a train that comes along behind. Here again, we get the English word "stole," and the stole is something that a lady puts around her shoulders. It's a rather along decorative object, and it has a kind of a stately appearance.

This is the kind of garment, we're told in Mark 12:38, that the scribes used to like to go around the community wearing. Mark 12:38 tells us that they did it to be able to show off. They did it to be able to be conspicuous. So, they wore their long clothing – this kind of clothing that John sees these martyred saints wearing.

It's actually also a festive garment. In Luke 15:22, this is the kind of garment that the father tells the servant to go to put on his returned son. So, it's a garment which is one of festivity. Here, its color symbolizes ultimate sanctification of those who have been saved in the tribulation period by trusting in Jesus Christ. In other words, these long, stately, white garments signify that these are people who now possess absolute righteousness.

In Revelation 6:1, we read before: "And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said to them that they should rest for a little season until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." This is referring to these same people. They were given these white robes because they now were entitled to them. We have already read in Revelation 7:14 that these people have washed their filthy robes white in the blood of the Lamb, which indicates again their personal salvation – their personal possession of absolute righteousness.

**Holding Palm Branches**

There's one other thing that John observes about these people. They are in these dramatic, long, stately, white robes, and then his eye is drawn to their hands, and he sees that they're holding in their hands palm branches. The word is "phoinix." "Phoinix" is the word for a branch from a date palm tree. He says that they're standing there holding these branches in their hands. What's the significance of that? There they are: dressed in white; a dramatic, impressive company. And John sees these martyred saints standing and waving these palm branches in their hand.

Well, for us to understand this, it is necessary for us to go back into Jewish history. That's how we interpret the book of the revelation. We don't just pick things out of the air and conjure up something that we think might fit and make a good explanation. We look back in the Bible, and say, "Where our palm branches used, and what is significant about them?

**Jewish Feasts**

In the religious year of Israel, there were seven feasts that God appointed for the theocracy of the Jewish people. There were three feasts that required all the males to report in to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate that particular occasion. The first was Passover, which of course represented the provision of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. The second was the feast of Pentecost, which portrayed the calling out from Jew and gentile of a special people through salvation provided by God.

**The Feast of Tabernacles**

The third one was called the feast of tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles is referred to in Leviticus 23, which is the background of what we see in this scene in heaven. If you understand the feast of tabernacles, the waving of the palm branches comes into significant meaning. In Leviticus 23:34, we read, "Speak unto the children of Israel saying, 'The 15th day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord." So, the feast was to run for seven days. It actually went from a Sabbath day, and it ended on the next Sabbath day.

Leviticus 23:39: "Also in the 15th day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days. On the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath." It began and closed on a Sabbath day.

Drop down to verse 42: When they celebrate this feast of tabernacles, "You shall dwell in booths (or in tabernacles). For seven days, all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God." So, this feast, which was the last in the order of seven feasts ordained by God for Israel's ceremonial year, was particularly designed to help them to be reminded that there was a time when they had temporary structures in which they lived as they wandered in the wilderness after God brought them out of Egypt, and while he was taking them to the happiness and to the fulfillment of the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 16:13: "You shall observe the feast of tabernacles seven days after you have gathered in your grain and your wine." So, that tells us when the feast is to take place. It actually took place late in September or early October in the Jewish year, and it was right after the harvest season. Verse 14 says, "And you shall rejoice in your feast: you and your son and your daughter; your manservant and servant; and the Levite and the Sojourner; and the Fatherless; and, the widow who are within your gates. Seven days you shall you in all your increase and in all your works, keep a solemn feast unto the Lord God in the place where the Lord shall choose (which was the temple at Jerusalem), because the Lord your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all your works in your hands. Therefore, you shall surely rejoice."

So, the people were taught that when they got into the Promised Land, the last of the feasts that they would observe at the end of the religious year at harvest time was going to be this feast of tabernacles, which would be designed to remind them of the temporary structures they once lived in, as God led them assuredly, without any doubt, to the glorious, happy life that they had in the richness of the Promised Land. It was after the harvest was in – that here was another year when God had come through for them in the abundance of food, and in the abundance of taking care of them.

In Exodus 23:16, for this reason, this feast is also called the feast of ingathering, because it had to do with the harvest season, and it was to be remembered for seven days. Actually, it came five days after the Day of Atonement, and they celebrated that the crops were in the barn. It was a time for reminding themselves, and remembering of God's gracious provision of food for another year. The men from all over the nation had come to celebrate this event.

**The Feast of the Day of Atonement**

The feast of the Day of Atonement portrayed the nation's forgiveness of sin. On that day, you remember, they took one of the goats, and the priest symbolically put his hands on the goat, and committed the sins of the people to that animal. He was called the scapegoat. Then they turned him loose out into the wilderness, indicating that their sins were removed, never to be seen again. So, the people accepted the fact that God had covered their sin for another year. Then five days later, after that ceremony, comes this happy celebration of the feast of tabernacles, and they would build little booths out of branches, so that they could sit and live in those, in the outside, as they rejoiced in the fact that their barns were stuffed and filled to the brim with what God had provided for them.

The feast of tabernacles is a portrayal of the ultimate divine blessing, which is to come upon the people of Israel in the millennium, which will be their final time of great national rejoicing following the time when the Messiah returns to the earth. We have this referred to in Isaiah 35:1-2.

So, the millennium is going to be the ingathering harvest. The ingathering harvest of what? Of nations – to Jesus Christ, the true God. Zachariah 8:23 and Zechariah 14:8-16 describe how the nations of the world are going to gravitate in the millennium toward the nation of Israel, and to its ruler Jesus Christ. So, the millennium will be the great harvest time of nations, represented by the harvesting of the feast of tabernacles.

Sometimes the Jews today will call this the feast of "succoth." This comes from the Hebrew word "sukkah," which means simply "a booth." 2 Samuel 11:11 Levin uses that word. But these booths reminded them of the fact that they had a temporary sojourning situation, their permanence in the future was yet ahead of them.

**The Hallel Psalms**

There was one thing that took place during the celebration of the feast of tabernacles which brings in these palm branches. On the last day of this seven-day feast, they had a special ceremony. This last day was called in the Hebrew "Hoshana Rabbah," meaning "the day of the great Hosanna." They had a great ceremony, marching around, with trumpets blowing. On the last day of this seven-day feast of tabernacles, the priests would gather all the people together, and they would sing a series of songs which were called the "Hallel Psalms. They are Psalm 113 through Psalm 18. The word "Hallel" means "hallelujah" (praise). As a group, as they sang, they waved: guess what? Palm branches in their hands. These are psalms of great rejoicing, and psalms of great blessing from God. They would waive the palm branches as they sang through these psalms. Near the end of the series of sounds, in Psalm 118:25, are the words: "Save now, I beseech you, O Lord." The Hebrew words for "save now" are "Hoshana Rabbah:" "Save now day." It is the day of the great Hosanna.

**Palm Sunday**

So, the feast of tabernacles actually forms the background of Palm Sunday. You remember that on Palm Sunday, Jesus came into Jerusalem, in fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture, riding on the back of a donkey. The people gathered before Him. They pulled down palm branches. They waved them before Him, and they laid them out in the pathway for the animal to walk across as Jesus rode on his back. Do you remember what they said? They cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is see that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest," because this was the last day of the feast of tabernacles. It was the great Hosanna. It was the great hallelujah praise day. It was the great day of calling out, "Save us, Hosanna." In Mark 11:8-11, you may read the details of that.

So, the people in the procession, when they shouted, "Hosanna," were shouting out to Jesus, "Save us." The people were ready for the full Messianic Millennial Kingdom to come in, as was portrayed by the feast of tabernacles that they had been observing. This is the same group, you remember, however, that one week later, Mark 15:13-14 tells us screamed out, "Crucify Him." One of the rituals that they did perform upon this happy occasion was the waving of the palm branches as an expression of joy. This is why, in heaven, John sees these martyred saints with their robes of absolute righteousness, and carrying the palm branches, meaning that all the suffering is past, and all the misery is gone. It is nothing but absolute happiness in the circumstance in which they now find themselves in heaven, in the Lord's presence.

Today, you and I observe this feast of the tabernacles as Christians in our hearts, and we too have our palm branches, so to speak, that we wave in rejoicing and in the anticipation of joining those martyrs in heaven. 1 John 5:10-13: "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. He that does not believe, God has made him a liar, because he does not believe the record that God has given of His Son." God has told us something about His Son. The people yelled, "Save us, save us," on Palm Sunday: "Hosanna! Hosanna!" Here is the provision that He had come to make of that salvation. Instead, they crucified Him. But God the Father, by that act on their part, laid the groundwork for the salvation that they were calling out for.

We have the message of that salvation that comes from God. This is the record that God has given to us – eternal life, and this life is in His Son. How do you become a Christian? By having a religion? No, but by having a relationship to the person of Jesus Christ: "He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God has not life. These things have I written unto that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God."

So, if you have trusted in the person of Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you may rest assured that you are authorized to waive one of those palm branches. You have something to rejoice in because you are saved, and you can never be removed from that position.

So, John, in heaven, must have been very thrilled when he looked up there, knowing what he knew, and had observed so often himself; the feast of tabernacles. When he looked at these people from all the people on the face of the earth, and there they stood with their white robes of absolute righteousness, and in their hands that symbol, the palm of rejoicing, that characterized the feast of tabernacles. That was a happy feast. That was a really true holiday. People came to Jerusalem rejoicing. The place was packed, as the Scriptures indicate, and it was a time of great celebration because of the provisions that God had made. That was for their material needs, but the greatest happiness was for our spiritual needs, which He has provided, and which the feast of tabernacles reflected.

Some day we too will have those palm branches to wave. We no longer shout, "Hosanna!" We no longer have to cry out, "O God, save us." It's just waving the palm branches of thank you for having done it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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