***Honor, Power, and Might

RV135-02***

We are dealing with the tribulation converts in Revelation 7:9-17. This is segment number five.

The members of the human race who have been born again out of total spiritual darkness and gross sin are the kinds of people who have a very deep awareness of the stark contrast between their new spiritual enlightenment and the darkness that they once walked in. They have experienced a night-and-day contrast between their unsaved days and their regenerated life. They have a sense, therefore, of having been rescued by God from a pit of vile evil. People who grow up in the Christian life, and who grew up in a Christian home, do not always appreciate that night-and-day contrast. These who do come out of that kind of darkness, however, are deeply appreciative for what God has done for them since they could not have attained that on their own.

**Worship**

We have, in this portion of the book of the Revelation, been looking at some tribulation believers – people who have been born again during the tribulation seven-year period, but who have paid for their faith in Jesus Christ with their lives. They have been martyred. John sees this body of martyrs in heaven redeemed from a bleak and hopeless and blinded past, and now exhilarated by the fact that they actually find themselves in the very presence of Jesus Christ. Their gratitude is expressed in joyful worship of God – the God who made all of this possible.

1. **Blessing**

Worship, of course, is expressing, in a variety of ways, our adoration and our admiration of God. We have seen that they worship God by calling out, first of all, blessing upon Him. Blessing involves praise, prosperity, and dedication. So, Christians bless God by praising Him for who and what He is; by prospering His work with their finances; and, by personal dedication to His service. All of these are included in the word "blessing." In these three ways, we bless God.

1. **Glory**

Secondly, in heaven, they are worshiping God by calling for glory to Him. The word glory refers to recognizing the unique essence of God which separates Him above all rational beings in the universe. God's glory is displayed in the beauty and the brilliance of the light which surrounds Him. The Christian glorifies God by completing the Lord's mission that He has for that believer, as Jesus Christ glorified His Father by completing His mission.

1. **Wisdom**

Third, we see that these people in heaven were worshiping God by proclaiming His wisdom. This word refers to God's divine viewpoint insights into the true nature of things. God has discernment to identify what is of eternal value in one's life in order to make the best decisions. Many decisions that Christians make are bad decisions because they don't make them in terms of things that are of eternal value in their lives. So, they waste themselves on trivial secondary things. Human wisdom is, therefore, foolishness when it's compared with God's wisdom.

1. **Thanksgiving**

In the fourth place, they were worshiping God by expressing thanksgiving. This is the word which connotes gratitude to God. A great variety of reasons in our daily lives call for expressing gratitude to God. Being thankful to God, of course, is essential for preserving our blessings from Him. When we cease to be appreciative and grateful for the blessings that He gives us, we will lose them. Thanksgiving has certain characteristics which are to be considered in its use, and we have looked at several of those.

**Characteristics of Thanksgiving**

We will pick our study up on the praise and the expression of worship through thanksgiving by looking at some of the characteristics of thanksgiving.

* 1. **It is Good to Thank God**

These are the things that should qualify our expressions of thanksgiving. First of all, the Bible tells us that it is a good thing to thank God. In Psalm 92:1, this is pointed out to us. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Your name, O, Most High." It is a good thing to take time to thank God for the things for which he ought to hear our expression of gratitude. It is a thing that is a benefit to ourselves in reminding us of how much we need what He is doing, and as well as what He has done.

* 1. **Thanks God for All Circumstances**

Philippians 4:6 points out that we are to be thankful to God, and express our gratitude under all the circumstances that hit us in life. This is a harder one to do" "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. There are many unpleasant and painful things that come into one's life. There are many pressures and stresses that we would just as soon that we didn't have to face. But the Word of God says, "Be thankful for them when they come. Taking them in the stride of God's dealing with you, and in His overall plan, you will discover that He brings indeed good out of every crises in life. As we've learned in Romans 8:28, that is exactly what God is doing – meshing of all these unpleasant things for our good. So, it is a good thing that we should thank God for whatever comes into our lives.

Then 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says that it is the will of God that we express our thanksgiving to Him: "In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." There are many things that we would wonder about, and like to know, as to what God's will is, in some specific condition or circumstance of our lives. Well, here's one thing that you can count on. It is the will of God that you should express your gratitude to Him. So, therefore you are at the center of His will when you do it.

Ephesians 5:20, furthermore, tells us that thanksgiving is something that we should do always: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are to be giving him thanks always: not only when you've gotten a new car; not only when something marvelous has come into your life; and, not only when you've had a near miss with some disaster, but to give thanks always, just in the normal stride of the routines of life – to give thanks in that case.

* 1. **Ingrates Become Arrogant**

Romans 1:21 tells us that when we neglect thanksgiving it leads to arrogance, and it results in our loss of blessings: "Because when they knew God (the early race of human beings), they did not glorify Him as God; neither were thankful (for the information that they had about God); but became vain in their imaginations (permitted their sin nature arrogance to express itself, and the consequence was that), their foolish hearts (or minds) were darkened." Because they did not appreciate the information they had about God, their minds became dark. So, failure to thank God leads to human arrogance of thinking that you're doing just as well, and doing OK on your own, and you will lose the blessings.

* 1. **Thanksgiving in Heaven**

In heaven itself, as we are seeing the very passage that we are looking at, thanksgiving is a very prominent feature. This is also pointed out in Revelation 11:17, where we read, "Saying, 'We give thanks, O Lord, God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come, because you have taken to You Your great power, and have reigned." Here we are looking forward to the fact that Jesus Christ is going to take over this world society, and rule it as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, which is a feature where, ultimately in heaven, we will be expressing our gratitude that He has done that.

* 1. **The Procedure for Thanksgiving**

When we do express our thanks to God, there is a procedure for doing that. Colossians 3:17 spells that out for us: "And whatever you do in order or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." You thank God the Father. It is to him that thanksgiving is expressed, and it is done on the basis of your relationship to Jesus Christ.

* 1. **Don't Use Unfit Words**

Ephesians 5:4 tells us that there are times when we are tempted to use language which is unfit, and the Bible advises us, at such times, to use our mouths thanking God instead of using unfit words. Paul says, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." Don't use your mouth for filthy talk or for stupid talk. Don't use your mouth for telling jokes which are improper, but rather use your mouth as a Christian for giving God thinks.

* 1. **It is a Command to be Thankful**

Finally, in Colossians 3:15, we are told that it is a command of God: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body, and be thankful (and that's the command in the Greek language) for the fact that you have been called into the body of Christ.

So, thanksgiving to God is, of course, an activity that comes very naturally to the mature believer. Learning about God, and about His ways, gives us the capacity to appreciate Him. That's why we study the Word of God. It is that which enables us to appreciate who God is, and what He has done for us, in order for us to have a spirit of gratitude to express to Him.

The carnal Christian, of course, operates on the arrogance of this nature. Therefore, he's never appreciative, and he has no capacity to thank God.

1. **Honor**

Then in Revelation 7:12, the next expression of worship is the word "honor." This mass of humanity shouts out, "Honor" to God. This is the Greek word "time." This word expresses esteem for someone. It connotes the recognition of the dignity that a person has, and the esteemed position which he holds. It is respect for the place that this person has in God's plan. There are a variety of expressions of honor that we find in the Bible to guide us in how we do honor, and how we do express honor.

1 Peter 2:17 tells us that we should have honor toward all people for the fact that they have been created in God's image, and that they are those for whom Christ has died: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Honor all men." Everybody should be esteemed because he has been made in the image of God, and because he indeed is someone for whom Christ has died. So, no matter what a terrible bestial human being he may be, he is someone that God has made the basis for him being straightened out.

Then in Romans 13:7, we were told that we Christians should express our honor and our esteem for the people who have it coming. There are certain human beings that deserve the expression of honor: "Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to tribute is do; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; and, honor to whom honor." Who deserves your honor? Jesus Christ deserve your honor and your esteem. Your parents deserve your honor and esteem. Your marriage partner deserves your honor. The people who are older than you are, those who are in fact elderly, deserve your esteem and honor. Civil authorities; the pastor-teacher; your employer; your personal body (your physical structure); and, those who produce divine good works – all of these are areas that deserve the application of our honor and esteem.

We're told that God is honored with a Christian's money, in Proverbs 3:9, and He is honored with temporal fellowship in 2 Timothy 2:20-21: "But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor, and some to this dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself of these (these sins), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and fit for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." It doesn't matter what you're made of: whether you're a gold type person; whether you're a silver type; whether you're a more modest type of person; whether you're a more ungifted type person; or, you're the wood type of person. The Word of God says that the person who has prepared himself in his life with the Word of God, and follows the guidance of God's lifestyle, is a person that God will honor, no matter what you begin with.

In John 12:26, we're told that God himself honors those who serve His Son: "If any man serve Me," Jesus says, "let him follow me. And where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me, My Father will honor him." And many Christians are going to discover that for their simple practice of serving Jesus Christ, in one way or another, with their spiritual gifts and abilities, God will someday greatly honor them.

You, of course, cannot honor God the Father if you do not honor His Son, Jesus Christ. That's why no Jew, for example, is able to honor the God that He claims to honor. John 5:23 says, "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who had sent Him. So, you can't be talking about honoring God if you're not a Christian. You're not honoring Jesus Christ. You can't talk about honoring God, if you reject Jesus Christ as the Jews and the Muslims, do for the God-man that he is. You are operating on the delusion. And no matter how these groups talk about God, and exalting Allah, and praising him, and viewing him with such admiration, they are not honoring God at all. You can only do that through Jesus Christ.

Because he is the preeminent person of the universe, the Bible tells us that, someday, all the world is no longer going to be asked to honor Jesus Christ. They are going to be forced to do it. Philippians 2:9-11: "Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Every time should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; that is, that He is deity.

So, when these people shout out honor to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are indeed doing something that pleases God tremendously in our relationship to His Son – to express our esteem for Him, and then our esteem for all the things that are associated with Him that He also honors.

1. **Power**

The next thing that these people call out in the heavenly throne room is the word "power." The word is "dunamis." The word "dunamis" means "ability." This connotes an inherent capacity to do something. We may be illustrated from Luke 6:19, which says, "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for there without power (ability) out of Him, and healed them all." Jesus Christ had the ability to heal people, and the word "dunamis" describes that. Such a capacity, in God's case, is viewed as an ability to perform miracles. So, when Jesus Christ healed people, He was performing a miracle as men could see it.

God is worshiped as the one who has, therefore, the capacity of omnipotence. When you talk about power, that's something that God indeed has. The power of Jesus Christ, as a member of the Godhead, has been demonstrated in a variety of ways. In John 1:3, we're told that Jesus Christ had the power to create the universe out of nothing, by means of His spoken word: "All things were made by Him; that is, by Jesus Christ. Without Him there was not anything made that was made." Carl Sagan is wrong. The material universe is not eternal. The thing that is true is that God spoke the material universe into being, and He spoke it into exactly the form and the shape that he wanted. There was no evolutionary process. It is Jesus Christ who is the agent of creation. He has the ability to do that. What we see in the material world was the direct result of what He simply spoke into existence. He commanded, and there it was.

In John 3:2, we are told again that He has the power to perform miracles: "And the same came to Jesus by night, and said to Him (this is Nicodemus speaking), 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that You do except God be with Him." Jesus Christ was able to perform miracles because He had a power. Why? Because he was God. No, He didn't function on that when He was here. When He was on this earth, He walked this earth just the way you and I do – as a human being. The powers that He exercised were the powers that God gave to His humanity. He had the power to perform miracles, as the early apostles did, by an act of God empowering Him to do that. So, indeed, He could be praised for power. He had great ability.

Of course, one of the hardest areas to have power over is to be able to control Satan. 1 John 3:8 tells us that Jesus Christ is able to do that: "He that commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." There was a time in your unsaved days when you were powerless before Satan. But now it is almost frightening for us to realize that we've got a leg up on the devil. He cannot overcome us. The devil is now inferior in capacity to us because, as the Scripture tells us: "Greater is He (the indwelling Holy Spirit) than he that is in the world (Satan)." The Bible also tells us that if we resist Satan, he'll put his tail between his legs, and he'll run.

Now, I shouldn't say that, because some of you are going to now say that the devil has a tail, the way you see him in cartoons, with a sharp point on the end. No, he doesn't look like that, because if you saw him like that, you'd run automatically yourself.

But he does have a capacity to lead you astray if you'll be dumb enough to let him do it. But he no longer has the power over you that he once had. So, the Bible tells us that indeed, if you resist him on the basis of the Word of God and the capacity of the Holy Spirit, he will just sulk away like a mad, angry animal. You have power over Satan. That's one reason these martyrs in heaven were shouting, "Power" to Jesus Christ as an expression of their worship.

Of course, there is no greater power than that of being able to give temporal and eternal life. In John. 5:21, we read, "For as the Father raises up the dead (that's real power – to bring to life a person who has died), and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He will." The Son gives spiritual life. Indeed, our Lord should be praised with the recognition that He has the great ability of the power to raise a dead body to life, as he will do for all of us someday, and to give spiritual life, as He has done to all those who have trusted in Him.

In Philippians 3:21, we're told that not only that Jesus Christ have the power to raise a dead body of the believer back to life, but that He will raise that body minus the sin nature: "Who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body (a sinless person, and absolutely perfect), according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Jesus Christ will not only raise that body back to life, but He will raise it minus the sin nature. Furthermore, all the physical defects will be corrected. The body will be back in top operating condition, no matter how it was when He died.

It is the omnipotence, then, of God which is exercised in our behalf as Christians in a variety of ways because He has the power to do that.

1. **Might**

Then they called out another word in praise of the Heavenly Savior, and that is the word "might." The word "might" is the Greek word "ischus." "Ischus" means "strength." This word connotes "physical health." That's an interesting thing to shout out in praise of Jesus Christ, recognizing His physical strength; His physical well-being; His manliness; and, His personal health. If there's anything that you want to remember about Jesus Christ, it is that he was not the wimpish girlie-looking figure that in the Christian book stores that sell pictures of Him.

I don't know how many misleading pictures I've seen. Every now and then, somebody feels they should give me a gift, and instead of giving me an airplane, or a boat, or something useful, they give me things like pictures of the Jesus Christ with his girly, long hair. I've been trying to figure out what to do with them. I've been trying to find some poor soul that I can pass them off on. But I just don't move in circles where people are dumb enough to appreciate a gift like that, and to think of Jesus Christ that way.

It's a wonderful thing that these people shout, "Ischus, Lord – the great and mighty, manly, virile Jesus Christ. The Bible points out to us that the nature of this physical strength is indeed a characteristic of Jesus Christ. In John 2:13, we read of this physical strength: "And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables." You must understand that this was a vast number of people. There were all kinds of places where they were doing business on the temple grounds, which was sacrilegious; which they were not supposed to do; but, for which the priests were looking the other way, and forbidding the people to do, probably for a kickback. So, they were carrying on business within the temple grounds. They had all these animals. They had all these stalls. They had all these people who were engaged in business.

Then in comes one man with a scourge (a whip) that He had made in His hand, and He walks up to them, and He says, "Get out." And when they don't understand it, He kicks over their tables in order to make His day. And pretty soon, they're all running. And He cracks the whip, and the sheep start running, and all the animals start yelling and moving out, and the place is pandemonium as they're pouring out of the temple grounds. And pretty soon there is silence, and there stands the "ischus" – the manly, physically capable Jesus Christ as the victor in behalf of His Father's honor.

"He said unto them that sold the doves, 'Take these things from here. Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise.' And His disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of Your house has eaten me up.'" They remembered that the text of the Old Testament, describing this Messiah, said that He would be so zealous for God's house (which was that temple, at that time), and that it would so consume Him that He would rise to an occasion like this with indignation to remove this sacrilegious, blasphemous treatment.

In Philippians 4:13, Jesus Christ, we're told, provides the physical capacities that you and I as Christians need to do God's work. And don't forget that you do not do the Lord's work if you do not have the physical capacity to do it. You cannot do much in Christian service when you're not feeling well. You cannot do much for Christian service when you are pouring out your energies someplace else. You've only got so much physical capacity. You cannot serve the Lord very well if the body is not kept in a good physical condition. So, it is necessary that we have the physical capacity to do the Lord's work.

Therefore, Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." The word "Christ" is not in there in the Greek. It should not be in there. It says, "I can do all things through the One who strengthens me." The phrase "I can do" here is the word "ischuo." It's the verb form of "ischus:" "I can do." That means, "I can be strong in body. I can have physical healthy capacity to do all things that He calls upon me to do. There's nothing that I cannot do that He will not give me the physical capacity to do, that He has called me to do.

Somebody asked me this morning: "Since we are called by election to eternal life, is that how we are called? Are we called to a specified life because we have been chosen by God?" Exactly. That is exactly the way we are chosen. The Word of God also tells us that not only are we called into that eternal life by His elect calling, but the person also asked, "What about the matter of our Christian service? Is that indeed a divine calling?" I said, "That's exactly what the Bible tells us. We are his workmanship, called to perform the works which He has ordained."

This is going to be one of the great tragedies in heaven. When Christians stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Christians who have knocked themselves up with all kinds of Christian service; doing one thing and another with their physical capacity; and, championing causes that they felt were the causes that were of God that they should champion), many will discover that the Lord says, "Yeah, that was good, but it wasn't your business to do. You wasted your life. That was Sam Jones' job to do. I didn't call you to do that. I had this job for you, and I had to raise up this man to substitute for you because you were off there, butting your nose into what Sam Jones was supposed to be doing, or you were doing something that I had left for the world to do." There are many things that the unseen world can do in our society, just as well as Christians. And Christians (who are limited in our numbers) need to be zeroing in on those specific words to which God has ordained for us to do so.

So, you don't want to do just something because it's a good thing to do. You want to be sure that it's one of those good works to which God has called you, and which He has foreordained for you to be engaged in.

So, I can indeed do all things through the One who gives me this capacity. This is present tense – constantly. He gives me that capacity. It is active voice. God Himself does it. We would translate this perhaps in this way: "I have physical capacity for all things by means of the One who infuses me with inner strength."

In Ephesians 6:10, we're told that Christians are capable of doing things in the physical might which is provided by Jesus Christ. This is the very thing we're talking about: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His 'ischus:'" "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His physical capacity that He gives you." Now, that's good news, and a good thing to know.

The unbelievers themselves are, in time, to be eternally removed from the presence of the Lord's glorious physical power. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 specifically points this out about them when it says, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power," the glory of His physical capacity and presence. When they are in the lake of fire, that is one time that they are going to need a lot of help. The help that Jesus Christ is ready to give those who are in His family, will not be there to give to those who are in the lake of fire. The only help they can hope for is from the other people who are there. The only comfort they can hope for is from the other people who are there. But what little comfort will that be indeed, if they have the capacity not to be preoccupied with their own agonies, let alone to worry about helping comfort someone else? But for the Christian, the physical power of Jesus Christ will be available.

We're told in 1 Peter 4:11 that the Christian serves God by means of the physical power which He supplies. That concept is again reiterated: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability of the 'ischus' (of the physical capacity) which God gives; that God, in all things, may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Recognize that what you are able to do in God's service, He enables you to do because He gives you the physical capacity to do it.

At the start of the service today, somebody asked the question: "What happens to the person who is born into the Christian life, and shortly thereafter dies. What kind of an eternal reward may he hope for?" Very little. What happens to the Christian who is born-again and spends a long part of his lifetime and carnality doing human good? He will have very little in the way of eternal rewards. What happens to the person who is just never instructed in this truth about walking with the Lord in fellowship in order to be productive? He will have very little eternal rewards. Indeed, the person who does not have the physical capacity – he can do very little. It takes time to store treasures in heaven. That's why the Bible says that for people who do not invest that time: "There will be loss."

Hebrews 11:34 tells us that the Old Testament saints were able to do battle with the enemies of God in military combat on the basis of the physical capacity that God gave them. It uses this same word again: "Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness became strong, became valiant (and there's our same word 'ischus') in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." It is God who gave them the physical capacity to cause the armies that oppose God to flee.

Well, the tribulation saints are praising God for giving them the physical capacity that they needed on earth while they were under attack. Don't forget that – that these people have come through great suffering. And when they praise the Lord Jesus Christ for His physical capacity, they are also praising Him for the fact that when they were under the gun, He gave them the physical capacity to stand up under the suffering; to survive; to resist; and, to remain true when the body was being put into pain.

That is the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 7:12 is summarized in these seven keywords. Furthermore, this is something that we are told is going to be an eternal expression. We're told that all of these be unto our God. The word "God" is the Greek word "theos." And it says, "*The* God" (indicating God our Father), forever and ever" (literally: "unto the ages of the ages").

Then they close their expression of praise with the word "Amen," which means "so be it:" "truly indeed."

**John's Questions**

Well, John, of course, is awed by this whole scene. John knows what these words mean. He's been thrilled again to hear what is going on in heaven. But there are questions that he has in his mind which have not been enunciated by him verbally. So, beginning in verse 13, we have two questions that are raised that are in John's mind, but which he has not expressed. We read, "And one of the elders answered." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai." This is introducing a continuation of the narrative. We would translate it as simply, "Then:" "Then one." This is simply the Greek word "heis," which is the word for the numeral one (a single item): "One of." This is the preposition "ek," which means "one from among a larger group: "Of elders" ("presbuteros"). This is an adjective, but which is used as a noun here, referring to a person who has some age, as well as a person who has a dignity because of the office that he holds. This word "presbuteros" would, of course, very aptly, for example, apply to President Reagan. He has both the respect of age, and he has the dignity of a very important office in the nation. Here it refers to the 24 elders that are seated on their thrones surrounding the throne of God the Father.

These elders, as you know, represent the church in heaven after the great rapture event, which is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. We see that one of these, out of the group of 24: "answered." The word "answered" is actually "apokrinomai." "Apokrinomai" means really to take up the conversation – to begin to speak. So, one of the elders actually begins a conversation with John. That is what is being said here, rather than that he's answering something. If he is answering anything, it is the fact that he has sensed that John has two questions that he has not been ready to raise, and the elder is going to raise those questions for him. He begins the conversation. This is aorist tense – at the point when the elder comes up and begins speaking to John. The elder himself does the speaking. We would simply translate this "apokrinomai" as "asked."

**"Who are These?"**

Then we have the next word: "One of the elders asked, saying." This is the Greek word "lego." This is a word which introduces questions from the elder. The elder is personally pressing these questions, and making this statement. What he is doing is posing two questions which are in John's mind, as John views this multitude praising and worshiping God. So, we would really translate this as simply "addressing:" "Unto me;" that is, he addresses John directly. And the question he addresses is, "Who are these?"

**White Robes**

The word who is "tis." It is an interrogative pronoun. The word "are" indicates these who are before him. The word "these" is referring to the martyred saints. He says, "Who are these arrayed in white robes?" The word "arrayed" is the Greek word "periballo." This word means to be clothed, and it refers to white garments which are worn by these martyrs that John sees in heaven. This is, interestingly enough, in the perfect tense, which tells us that these white robes, representing personal, absolute righteousness imputed to them, were put on by themselves in the past, while on earth, when they trusted in Jesus Christ the Savior. Actually, they put these white robes on themselves when they decided to believe the gospel. However, it is passive voice. The garments representing salvation were put on them by God, as per God's grace plan of salvation which brings salvation as a gift. We have a spiritual principle being stated here. These robes are white, and the word for robe, you remember, is the Greek word "stole." That represents a stately, regal-like garment like a king would wear.

**"Where do they Come from?"**

So, we translate verse 13 in this way: "Then one of the elders asked (addressing me), 'These who are clothed in white robes, who are they?'" That is question number one. Who are they? Then he raises a second question: "And from whence?" The Greek word is "pothen." This is an adverb. It means, "Where did these people originate? Where did they come from? From whence are they come?" The Greek word is "erchomai." This is referring to arriving from someplace. It's in the aorist tense – at some point of origin on earth. It is active – personally experienced leaving this earth in death. It is a statement of fact. The elder's question is designed to show that this group of saints in the white robes is different from the church saints represented by the elders.

John looks at the elders. He understands that that represents the church which has been raptured and which is now in heaven. But John looks at these others and says, "Who are these people, and where do they come from?" In verse 14, we read, "And I said onto him." John makes a statement to this elder who is addressing him. He says to him, "Sir." The word "sir" is our old word "kurios," which is the word that is also used to mean "Lord." And the Greek Bible actually says, "*My* 'kurios;'" that is, "*My* Lord." It is an address of respect in the ancient world. And John has great respect for this elder who has approached him, and he said, "You." And it actually puts the word you ("su") separately there in the Greek Bible, because John wants to stress that: "You know the answer to those questions." The word "know" is "oida." "Oida" is a word that refers to knowledge that this elder has from some source of information. He has had it for some time. He personally possesses it.

"And I said unto him, 'My lord, you know.'" And the idea is: "You know, so tell me," which is exactly what the elder wanted John to do. John is confessing his ignorance on the subject, but he's also looking for information: "And he said to me." The elder proceeds to answer the question, "Who are all these people up here in these white robes?"

"He said to me, these are they who came" ("erchomai" again – arriving on the scene). And this time, "erchomai" is present tense, which indicates that these are people who are coming. They are constantly coming. The antichrist is slaughtering them, and they're still coming up here. They personally are arriving in heaven: "These are they who have come out of" (the word "ek" is that preposition which means "out of the midst." Here is a group of something, and these people have come out of that. And what he says that they have come out of is: "a great" (the word "megas", indicating some kind of a major source of their origin, and that is a) tribulation." The Greek word is "thlipsis." "Thlipsis" is a word that refers to pressures or afflictions. And in the Greek Bible, it has the word "the" in front of it, so it is telling you of a specific great tribulation. As a matter of fact, the Bible is very emphatic. It says, "*The* tribulation: *the* great one." And when the Greek puts it that way, it's making it very emphatic that this is a special, significant period of time.

As you know, after the rapture of the church, Daniel tells us that there is a seven-year period of time from the rapture of the church to the Second Coming of Christ. At the rapture of the church, we meet Jesus Christ in the air, and then he takes us up into heaven. At that point, we are standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ, being examined relative to our lives and the works we have done, and receiving our rewards. The seven-year period goes on. But the Bible also divides this period into two three-and-a-half year segments. This whole period in the Bible is called the era of tribulation. But the last three-and-a-half years is called the great tribulation. We're going to have to look at this more in detail next time, but we just want to lay the groundwork. The book of Daniel gave us a period of 70 weeks, with each week standing for a year. 69 of those weeks have been fulfilled.

These 70 weeks of years, Daniel was told, represent God's final dealing with the Jewish people, because that's what Daniel wanted to know: "How many more years are you going to do with us?" God says, "I'll tell you, Daniel, I'm going to deal with your people for 490 more years, and then I'll be through." Then the Lord explains how things are going to be divided – how there's going to come the Savior, and so on. Suddenly, they get down to the last week, and Daniel is told that the Savior Messiah arrives, and the people reject him. Then Daniel is told that everything's going to stop. It's going to be cut off. The Savior is going to be removed from the mission of setting up the Millennial Kingdom.

Consequently, everybody who has ever studied the Bible, and permits the Word of God to speak for itself, knows that Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled exactly year-by-year, except that seven years at the end was never fulfilled, because then God changed gears to bringing in the church, the body of Christ – a totally new thing that was not associated with the Old Testament at all, and is isn't going to be associated with the Jew later. It's something that's inserted – an object all by itself. We're part of that.

So, after the church is gone, then God is ready to go back to dealing with the Jewish people. He has seven more years when He's going to deal with them, and that's going to complete His time of dealing with them.

But in the middle of this time, a terrible thing takes place. At the beginning of the tribulation period, we've already learned, the antichrist comes along and he tells the Jew, "I will be your protector." Why the antichrist is in charge in such a position of power in the world – we're not sure. We do know that he operates out of Western Europe, in the area of the old Roman Empire. We may perhaps even suspect that the United States and Russia get into a nuclear war, and just blast each other out of existence. And perhaps that's why the United States doesn't even come into the prophetic picture at all. Russia indeed does. She is headed for a great dramatic national destruction. The Book of Ezekiel tells us that, but God Himself will bring that about. But in any case, in the meantime, Russia may have decided to jump the gun; to make a preemptive strike; and, to set its missiles out, and simply wipe out the United States. So, the United States is out of the picture. Russia then is victorious until God brings her down.

Now that leaves a vacuum, and in comes the antichrist as the man who is riding high. He is in charge. He tells the Jew, "I will be a protector. You've been under everybody's antagonism, and you may depend on me." That starts at the beginning of the tribulation. The Jews say, "Wonderful. We'll accept that." The antichrist says, "Why don't you set up your temple? Build your temple."

They have now discovered, and the Jews in Israel are quite confident that it has been a mistake to consider the site of the Dome of the Rock (the Muhammadan mosque) as the site of Solomon's Temple. They have now, from archeological examinations, discovered that the actual site of the Holy of Holies was a short distance north of that place, where the Muhammadans don't have any claim of any particular nature, so there is no problem for the Jews to start building the temple again tomorrow, where they are now satisfied that they have discovered the true site of the old temple.

So, the antichrist will say, "Go ahead and put the thing up again. Get your offerings. Get your sacrifices rolling again. Set up the whole thing the way it used to be.

Well, the rabbis have for many years been extensively examining and studying how the Old Testament system was actually performed in the sacrificial system. They have it all down in writing. They've have it all lined up and ready to go, waiting for the day when they can again re-institute the old temple worship. The antichrist is going to make that possible for them.

But then something terrible takes place in the middle of that seven-year period, because the antichrist now is in such a position of complete power (with the United States probably gone, but certainly Russia will no longer be accountable nation). So, that there's no one stronger than he is. He now becomes a world dictator, and then he decides to follow through with the concept of the New Age movement, and with the concept of Eastern mysticism – that deity lies within the human being. And he now declares himself to be the god of the world. He is now the god that the Jewish people must now turn to worship. Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15 describe the time when the abominable thing is done of putting up an idol of the antichrist into the Holy of Holies in the reconstructed temple of the Jewish people. And they are now told that now they must worship this god in the form of the idol that he has set up in the Holy of Holies.

Well, now another thing has happened in heaven at the same time. Satan, who has free access in and out of heaven, finds that now God directs Michael, the current archangel, to rally the forces of the elect angels, and they come to grips with the demon angels of Satan. They have one tremendous battle, and Satan is summarily defeated. The result is he is now thrown out of heaven. Jesus told how, on one occasion, speaking in preview, says, "I see Satan falling from heaven." Well, He's referring to this event in the middle of tribulation. Satan is thrown out of heaven, and the devil now is mad. He is truly mad as the devil. He is outright arranged, for the Bible says that now it has hit him. The time is short. He cannot outmaneuver the time schedule of Daniel. It's going to take place. It's been clicking off. He's got a short three-and-a-half years, and then his rage turns against all those who are followers of the Christ, be the Jew or gentile, but particularly the Jews.

That's when the great tribulation begins with enormous consequences to the people who are living at that time, and which is the source of funneling all of these martyrs that John sees up into heaven.

Next time we shall pick it up there, and look at greater detail at that event in the middle of the tribulation that produces these martyrs on earth.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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