***The Gospel of the Kingdom

RV136-01***

We are studying the tribulation converts in Revelation 7:9-17. This is segment number six.

**The Tribulation**

Revelation chapter 7 is an interruption of parentheses which has been put into the picture in order to give an explanation of some of the things that are happening in heaven while dramatic things are taking place on the earth. As we have seen, the apostle John has been privileged to be in heaven to hear the praise to God of the tribulation martyrs, because of the salvation which He provided for them. One of the elders, which represents the church, raises the question with John as to the identity of these praising saints in heaven: "Who are these people?" The elder identifies these saints as those who have come from the great tribulation era on earth after the rapture of the church. He is, of course, referring when he says, "The great tribulation," to Daniel's 70th week of Jewish history, which has been unfulfilled after the Jews murdered their Messiah, Jesus Christ. At that point in time, God's program for the Jewish people stopped, and God interjected a new program in the form of the church age.

**The Great Tribulation**

The Greek actually says, "*The* tribulation – *The great one*." Therefore, it is referring here to the last three-and-a-half years of the seven-year tribulation era.

Revelation 7:14: "And I said to him (John says, speaking to the elder), 'Sir (a respectful address), you know.' And he said to me, 'These are they who came out of the great tribulation.'" This is a point in human history which is yet before us in the future. It was referred to in the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel, which gives us the point at which this great tribulation period begins. Let's compare the New Testament passage to that. We'll approach it that way. Matthew 24:15 is referring to the same statement which Daniel makes: "When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation (the abominable thing that makes desolate), spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, whosoever reads it, let him understand." Daniel, the prophet said that, at a certain point in the final week of Jewish history, at the midpoint, something terrible would take place in the form of an abomination which would be introduced into their temple worship. Therefore, when you see that, then you know that the end is near.

In the rest of this passage in Matthew, Jesus goes on and tells the people that: "This is the time to get out. This is the time to try to flee the cities; get out of Judea; get into the mountains; and, get yourself out of there as fast as you can. Don't worry about taking a lot of clothes with you. Those of you who are pregnant are particularly to be pitied at this time because your circumstances are going to be very difficult." Jesus says, "Pray that you don't find yourself having to make this journey in the dead of winter, which will add even more difficulty to your escape."

However, there is going to come a point in time which is the termination of the Jewish temple worship, which will have been reestablished at that time under the protective custody of the antichrist, because the antichrist is going to turn against the Jews. So, the last three-and-a-half years of the great tribulation are specifically referred to here in these passages. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus is again quoting Daniel (He made such a reference), when He says, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be."

Of course, this is not a reference, as many would argue, to the general trials and sufferings that believers have experienced over the centuries. Indeed, we find in the Bible that there are periods of suffering for Christians. Acts 14:22 refers to that. Jesus tried to warn His disciples in John 16:3 that that would be their experience. Jesus said, "And these things they will do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me." And in the verses immediately preceding, He describes the punishment (the persecution) which will come upon believers. 2 Timothy 3:12 makes a reference to such a time in the experience of Christians: "Yeah, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." That is quite true today.

One of the most godly things a person today can do is to treat the Bible as the Word of God, and to treat the Bible as speaking upon certain subjects with authority, like economic matters. Do you realize that there are still Christians who have opportunity to be instructed in the Word of God who should know better, who try to pretend that the Bible does not teach only one system of economics – a system of private property ownership, and thus of a system which we call capitalism; and, that it actually condemns any efforts such as socialism, and so on. If you try to stand up today to that kind of a biblical principle, you will come under persecution. You will be extremely hated.

The state of Texas is up to its old tricks again. The state legislature has quietly passed the first reading of a new bill to bring private Christian schools under state licensing. Now where are we going to go? Are we going to knuckle under to those clowns? Are we going to look into the eyeballs of these people who get on television and say, "What we are trying to do," as I heard one man say, "is for the best interests of the children?" And they are telling us that you must have a certain kind of teacher. And eventually they'll tell us that their state institutions must even certify that you are qualified to teach. We Christians in the Christian education business are hated with a vengeance because we are standing against the whole global one-world system enterprise of the public school educational system.

There is now a group of people meeting who are among the most prestigious, highest-echelon people in our country, in the educational and other fields, who are gathering together to lay out a final program to bring about what they call a system of global education that will be imposed upon all the children of this country. And you will not be permitted to run the school if you do not have this curriculum for global education; that is, for children not to think in terms of nationalism. Do you know there are still some Christians today who sneer at the fact that the Word of God is against internationalism, as certainly was demonstrated at the Tower of Babel? They don't believe that God is for nationalism, as the book of Acts tells us very clearly – that God has laid out the boundaries of every group of people nationally upon the face of the earth, because He intends people to live as separate entities rather than as a one-world government.

You know that the highest powers in our country are trying to interrelate all the nations of the world – to try to join them together in some kind of a system of a united world government. Christians are hated for that because those who believe that, on the basis of the Bible, are the people who are godly. The ungodly want to do just the opposite. The Word of God tells us that the ungodly are going to win, and that the ungodly are going to bring down the Christian community.

Now, please don't come up to me and tell me that I'm very negative. Just go home and thank God that you're not as stupid as I am, if you're not succumbing to such idiotic notions as Paul's declarations concerning the end times in the book of 1 Timothy. Just go and enjoy yourself in the delusion that somehow you are going to make these things better, and that these people are not going to bring the country to its knees in its disaster. The truth of the matter is that they will.

One of the greatest terrible things that will come will be increasing pressure upon Christians. Who knows who of us now is going to end up in jail when we must be faced with taking a position, as Lester Roloff had to do? He had to say to the state government, "You will not come in and issue a license to us as a Christian school, because to grant you the right to issue a license is to grant you the right to control, and you have no right to exercise any control over God's work. If you can issue us a license for our Christian day school, you can issue us a license for our church, and for anything else that we do in the name of a ministry.

We have some interesting times ahead of us. Who knows where they will end up? Indeed, all through the centuries, Christians have suffered for godliness. But having said that, that is not the tribulation that is in view here in Revelation 7. We have had these people very clearly identified as to who these particular people are back in Revelation 6:9-11. These same martyrs were referred to in these words: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. And white robes were given on to every one of them, and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow servants also, and their brethren who should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled?"

So, this is the same group. Obviously, these people are clearly being described as participants in this era of Daniel's 70th week of his timetable for God's dealing with the people of Israel. Now those who have come out of the Reformation context that accepted the Roman Catholic interpretation of prophetic matters, and of the future, have rejected this passage of Scripture as referring to a specific time period upon this earth, particularly as having any reference to a special era where Christians are not present, such as in the tribulation period. The amillennialists make the people that they see here in heaven, that John is dealing with, as simply the saints of God of all ages. The great tribulation, they say, simply means the intensity of their personal sufferings.

**"Who are These?"**

However, the group in verse 13, we have seen, is a very special body from a particular era. Revelation 7:13: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, "Who are these who are arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come?" We have just, read in chapter 6, the identification of these people. It is very clear that the answers that John receives is that these are a special group of people. They are not Christians. They're already in heaven. They're not the 144,000. They're on earth testifying. They are not the angels. This is a very specialized group that has come out of that great tribulation time of suffering. The amillennialists relate this era of great persecution to past history, particularly to when Christians suffered under the Emperor Nero, and to what Christians have suffered over the centuries from the hands of the Popes. This is a figment of their personal assumptions. The picture here is strictly related to Jews who are being persecuted when, again, they are a nation in their own Promised Land under the protection of the antichrist.

As you know, we premillennialists always did know that the Jews were going to return to the Promised Land and become a nation. I knew that when I was a teenager because I had already been instructed in the prophetic Scriptures. I knew long before 1948 what was going to come along. Even when I was in the Bible department at Baylor University, and I would suggest that this sort of thing is going to come to pass in the future sometime – that Israel will again become a nation, all the Bible professors and the classroom burst out in laughter. Who could be so dumb as to think that the Jews are ever going to be a nation back in their homeland? Well, it didn't take very long after that era at the university before 1948 rolled around. And sure enough, the Jews became a nation, and the prophetic Scriptures took one more step forward in being fulfilled. It made it really tough on the amillennialists, because now they had a problem on their hands. What in the world are they going to do with the nation of Israel that exists here again, when all of their theology said that God had washed them off his hands because they had forfeited their privileges, and God had given all those privileges to the church> Now they found that they have the church and the Jews both very much on their hands.

Well, the book of the Revelation, in short, does not apply to past history. That's not what it's describing. The book of the revelation is describing basically what is in the future. Those who belittle that the book deals with the future are chasing rabbits, because they are simply ignorant of the Word of God, and they are oblivious to God's plans.

**Martyrs**

The martyrs that, we read about here in verse 14, who have come out of this great tribulation, were saved by gospel preaching during the period of the greatest crises and suffering that the world has ever seen, which is yet in the future. The gospel which is being preached to them, and will be preached to them, will emphasize the return of Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah to set up the Davidic Kingdom. The gospel will still be justification by grace through faith, but it will have a little different emphasis from the gospel that we preach today, that we refer to as the gospel of the grace of God. The good news for the people who will be living in the tribulation era will obviously be the release from that terrible time by the arrival of Jesus Christ at the Second Coming. That's the good news. And that good news gospel is what these 144,000 will be preaching.

In Matthew 24:29-30, we have that indicated immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

This is not a description of the rapture, because it is clear that, if you match this up to the Thessalonians passage that tells us about the rapture, nobody sees the rapture take place. All they see is a bunch of Christians who disappear from all over the face of the earth. But here it is clear that people are going to see something terrible happening out in space, in the natural planets and the stars and the structures out in space (the interstellar bodies), and then Jesus Christ will appear, and everybody on earth is going to see Him. So, it's going to be a totally different picture.

**The Gospel of the Kingdom**

The gospel of the kingdom is the gospel that says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to appear in just a few years." That's what they're going to be saying in the tribulation. It'll be basically the same gospel that was preached by John the baptizer, and that was preached by the apostles before the crucifixion of Christ. It's the gospel of the kingdom.

**The Gospel of the Grace of God**

Today we preach the gospel of the grace of God, which makes one a member of the church. You do not become a member of the kingdom today. Please do not be so foolish, and so uninstructed, and reveal your lack of knowledge of the Scriptures by talking about bringing people into the Kingdom of God, or bringing the kingdom in. We are brought into the church, and the only thing that we are to bring in is completion of the body of Christ, so that when the last believer that God has elected to be part of the body of Christ has been born again, we can get on out of here, for the rapture, can then, and will then, take place. So, we are not trying to bring in any kind of a kingdom. That's the Jews province, not ours today.

Therefore, today we do not preach the gospel of the kingdom. We preach the gospel of the grace of God, making us members of the body of Christ. The gospel of the kingdom, however, is what 144,000 will be proclaiming.

Furthermore, we're told that the Second Coming of Christ cannot take place until this gospel of the kingdom has been preached all over the world. Matthew 24:14 points that out, and you'll see why it is important that you make the distinction between the specific emphases of the gospel: "And this gospel of the kingdom (which I have just been describing to you) shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. And then the end shall come."

Now those who are not well versed in Scripture (many a preacher) loves to take this verse and make a big missionary appeal out of it. He loves to get up there before crowd, and pound the pulpit and say, "Now you see, if you people do not get out and support missionary endeavors, and if you do not get out and start witnessing, Jesus Christ cannot come back. You're holding back the rapture because it says here that this gospel has to be taken to every nation on the face of the earth before the end can come." You could only come to that assumption by not keeping things in their proper order.

Matthew 24 and 25 is called the Olivet Discourse, delivered by Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives to his Jewish disciples as Jews, relative to the Messianic Kingdom that they were all hoping was going to arrive, and which they had been proclaiming in the gospel of the kingdom that they had been preaching for three years under the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is not speaking here about coming into the era of the rapture with the return of Jesus Christ. Nothing stands in the way of the return of Jesus Christ in the rapture. He can come at any moment. We say, "His coming is imminent." There is nothing that has to be fulfilled in Scripture so that He can come. But for the second – to come down to this earth, there are certain things that must be fulfilled, and this is one of them.

Furthermore, these believers who survive the tribulation horrors, until the Second Coming of Christ, are going to enter the millennium without having to die. Matthew 24:13 tells us that: "But He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved;" that is, "saved" in the sense of being preserved into the millennium – being preserved through the era of the suffering of the tribulation.

Here's another passage of Scripture that the preachers like to wax very eloquent upon. They like to take this and use this as a proof that you can be lost again. Someone was describing a friend today, and describing what the person thought, and what he had said. He said, "I get the impression (I'm inclined to believe) that this person is born again, but I'm not sure." I suggested that one of the ways that could give some certainty concerning what this person believed and what his relationship was with Jesus Christ was to ask him whether he thought he could ever lose his salvation. Once a person says, "Oh, yes, you can lose your salvation," that is almost a sure indication that their faith is not in Christ alone, but is in Christ plus what they can do as far as behaving themselves, and in conducting themselves in a way that is acceptable to God. So, it's not salvation by faith, but it's salvation by faith plus works, and that is no salvation at all.

So, this verse, you should understand, is simply saying that some of these martyrs are going to end up in heaven. We've been looking at those in Revelation 7. But he is also saying that some of the martyrs are going to survive through the tribulation period, because they're going to get help from someone that is sympathetic to them: to give them the food; to give them the water; to give them the shelter; and, to give them the care that gives them protective custody out of the reach of the antichrist's agents.

This great outburst of Satan's fury, through the antichrist, against the tribulation saints and against the Jews in particular, is going to be caused by the expulsion of Satan from his access into heaven, and therefore his being aware of his imminent doom. You can read about this in Revelation 12:7-17 and Revelation 13:1-8. The devil will be thrown out of heaven. This will be the result of a great battle between Michael, the current archangel, and the elect angels, and Satan and his demon angels. And Satan and his demon angels will be whipped handily, and then they will be thrown out of heaven. Satan will never again be able to enter that realm where he once was the chief agent representing the Holy God, as he at one time was the archangel. He will never again be able to walk in there and accuse us as he is doing now, and as he did to Job, and as, night and day, he calls God's attention to our weaknesses and our sins. He will be thrown out. That will enrage him. He knows enough about what God has predicted such that that means that he does not have any more time than three-and-a-half years to go. That's why he turns everything loose. He says, "This is the time. We have to go for broke." And he puts his demonic angels into high gear, killing every person that he can find that is trusting in Jesus Christ.

Of course, as we have already seen, what is happening in the realm of nature, these martyrs who trust in Christ are not only going to be killed by the antichrist and his agents, but they will also be killed as a result of the many natural disasters which God will send upon the mankind of the tribulation era.

**Washed in the Blood**

So, coming to Revelation 7:14, in the latter part, we read furthermore about these people – that they have: "Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The word for "washed" is the regular Greek word "pluno." This is the word for cleansing something. At some point in the life of these believers, they believe the gospel (the gospel of the kingdom). And in the Greek Bible, it's aorist tense. Aorist tense is a point (once-for-all) action. You don't believe again, or believe again and be saved and believe again. This is the beauty of the Greek language. The very way it says, "They have washed their robes" is stated in the Greek language to tell you that they only do it once. They wash their robes once. You don't have to do it again if you've truly been washed in the blood of the Lamb. It's active voice. It's their personal act of faith.

What they wash, we're told, is there "stole," which refers to their garments, which are white, representing their absolute righteousness which is imputed to them as believers. This picture here may be reflecting the Old Testament (as the symbols which are used in the book of the Revelation always do reflect something else in the Bible). Exodus 19:10 may be the background of this washing of their garments in order to remove the stains of sin, upon the occasion of receiving the Mosaic Law: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go on to the people and sanctify them (set them apart) today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes."

Verse 14: "And Moses went down from the mount, unto the people, and sanctified the people, and they wash their clothes." This was a ritual, symbolic action indicating, by the washing of their garments, that they were now going to be in the presence of a holy God who was going to give them the great Mosaic Law with all the revelation that gave them, especially in the moral code, for preserving their personal freedom.

So, the picture here that we see in Revelation is reflecting this sort of thing – that the Jews had in their past experience. The very sobering passage in Isaiah 64:6 gives us the opposite side, where the garments are stained with the effects of sin: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all of our righteousnesses (our human good works) are as filthy rags, and we do all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." So, Isaiah gives the opposite picture. You normally stand before God as a person who is just covered with all kinds of filth in the clothing that you're wearing.

You can even pursue this on your own in the example of a man named Joshua, the high priest (not the Joshua who led them into the land) in Zechariah 3:3-5, who also reflects this coming before God with getting your clothes clean. When they do clean their clothes, these people in heaven that have become martyrs, the word is "made white." It's "leukaino." "Leukaino" means to make something brilliantly clean. It's in the aorist tense. It was done in the past (once-for-all). You wash your clothes once-for-all (this symbol of being saved). It's active voice. It's a personal act that you do. It is indicative – a statement of fact. And what is it that enables you to wash those filthy garments which here are covered with human sin? It is only one thing: "Wash them white in the blood." The Greek word is "hima." This is the regular word for blood, referring to what runs in the veins, and which here is symbolic of the blood which Jesus Christ shed as the "arnion" – the Lamb of God. "Washed in the blood of the Lamb" is referring to the spiritual cleansing which we have based upon the death of Jesus Christ.

**The Blood of Jesus Christ**

In Hebrews 9:22, it's put this way: "And almost all things are by the law, purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." All of the Old Testament sacrifices were an illustration of what Jesus Christ was going to do in the shedding of His blood through His death upon the cross. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament symbolize the death of Jesus Christ, as you see that sacrifice portrayed in Leviticus 17:14.

The church, which is the body of Christ, was purchased from the slave market of sin with the blood of Jesus Christ. Acts 20:28 tells us that. Jesus Christ, we're told in Romans 3:25, has satisfied the justice of God against a sinner through His should blood. Christians are justified before God, we are told in Romans 5:9, by the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. Believers are redeemed through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19). The blood of Jesus Christ is the basis for the peace between sinful man and a Holy God. Colossians 1:20 tells us that that's how we get that peace. Believers are pictured as being washed from their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, which is given in sacrifice for our sins in Revelation 1:5. And at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth, His shed blood for our sins, we're told, is going to be dramatically in evidence (Revelation 19:13). I don't know how that's going to be displayed, but one of the things that will be evident, to all eyes that see Him coming, is His shed blood.

So, the Bible is very explicit on the fact that Jesus Christ died not for Himself, for He had no sin, but he died for those of us who do have sin. He died in behalf of someone else, and that's why He is called the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

So, John finds these people identified as those who came out of the great tribulation (the last three-and-a-half years of that seven-year period). He finds that these are people who have come out with garments which once were stained with sin, but now bear the white reflection of divine righteousness imputed to them because of the blood of Jesus Christ. How did they wash their robes? How can you wash your spiritual robes, so to speak? Simply by believing the gospel message that Christ died to pay for your sins. Accept that, and imputed absolute righteousness comes to you, and your garments of filth are washed immediately.

**Serving God**

In verse 15, we have the eternal peace of heaven: "Therefore, they are before the throne." The word "therefore" indicates the idea "for this cause." It refers to everything in verse 15, which explains to us why these people are fit to be in heaven, and why John sees them there. These people are in a certain status. Their status is "before" something. The word before looks: "enopion." This word means "in the presence of." They stand in the presence, we are told, of a throne. That is the word "thronos." This refers here to the imperial throne of God. It is the throne of *the* God; thus, the throne of God the Father.

**What Will we do in Heaven?**

What are these people doing whose robes have been washed white from all stain of sin? We're told that they stand before the throne of God, and they serve Him. The word "serve" is the Greek word "latreuo." "Latreuo" is a word that refers to someone who is working as a hired servant. It signifies something very interesting about life in heaven. People like to make jokes about going to heaven, floating around on a cloud, strumming a guitar or a harp, or playing a synthesizer, or something like that. They make all of these really stupid remarks and suggestions concerning what is going to happen in heaven. And I have had Christians say to me, "I am really concerned about going to heaven." I say, "Why?" They say, "Because I'm afraid I'm going to be bored. I'm the kind of a person who likes to do things. What am I going to do up there?"

Well, one thing you will be doing is serving. Indeed, that is exactly what we are being told here by this word "latreuo." It is a service that is being performed. It is in the present tense, which means it's constantly going to be going on. It is active. These martyrs that John sees are the ones who are going to be doing this. It's a statement of fact. I think this is a rather beautiful scene here in heaven – a group of born-again human sinners standing in heaven in the very presence of the Holy God as He sits on His throne. And there is no fear of doing that. They have no fear to stand in His presence, because they're clothed with His absolute righteousness. That's where they got those white garments. They are fully accepted by God on the basis of those white garments that clothe them. There's no standing around getting bored with nothing to do. There is some kind of a service which is assigned to these martyred saints, as there will be to us.

The Bible tells us that he who is faithful in little will be given much more over which to exercise authority. I can tell you right now that some of the people here on earth, within the Christian community, that impress us as real hotshots in what they do for God with their mouths, and with all of their maneuverings and causes that they pursue, are going to be peanuts in heaven, when it comes to carrying the authority. They're going to find that, down here on earth, you can be pushy; you can elbow your way; you can promote yourself and think that God has promoted. However, when you get up there, you're going to find that, yes, you will have service, but that service is going to be very dramatically reduced from what you thought you were going to have. And it is service that is going to have an effect upon your satisfaction in heaven.

**"Day and Night"**

I think people are quite right. It would be terrible to sit up there. I mean, how many times can you play through your repertoire on your harp? I mean, when you've done it, you've done it. It would be terribly boring with nothing to do up there. But there's going to be a very active thing, and it's going to be not only active in serving God, but it is going to be active in our own personal development as well. The constant service that will be involved is described here that: "We will serve Him day and night." "Day and night" is used here as an idiom. It means unceasingly.

We have this same idea used in Revelation 20:10, which will indicate to us that he is not talking about the cycle of the sun, of daylight and darkness. Revelation 20:10 uses this same expression where the devil, along with the antichrist and his false prophet, have been passed into the lake of fire. They are going to be tormented, and we are told that their tormenting is going to be "day and night:" "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever."

Now, there's not going to be a day-and-night cycle in hell. If there's anything that the Bible indicates, it's that it's going to be a place of darkness, and of great oppression because of the darkness. It is not going to be cycling day-and-night. So, the expression, when applied to hell itself, means that it's going to be continual. There's not going to be any letup from it.

**Constant Light**

In Revelation 21:25, we're told that, in heaven, there is no night at all: "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day (speaking of heaven – the heavenly Jerusalem), for there shall be no night there."

Revelation 22:5 reinforces this: "And there shall be no light there, and they need no lamp, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever."

So, in heaven, it's like being at one of the poles at a certain time of the year when it's daylight for 24 hours. There is never any darkness. So, these people who are serving God day and night, this expression is an idiom for the fact that they are serving constantly.

**Free of Earthly Limitations**

Furthermore, this indicates that these saints are now freed of all the limitations that they had here on earth. They just don't have to sleep. They don't have to stop to recuperate. Wouldn't you like not to have to sleep? No, some of you wish you could get more. But just think of what you could do if you didn't have to sleep. Every now and then, there comes a human being like Edison, who can get by with four hours of sleep a night. Just think of the enormous amount of time that man had to invest in active waking-hour activities. It's tremendous. But most people can't get by without that basic eight hours of sleep.

**In God's Temple**

These people in heaven are freed of all that. They're constantly serving. They never have to stop to sleep. And they are going to be serving, we are told, in God's temple: "Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him constantly in His temple."

**The Holy of Holies**

The word "temple" is the word "naos." In the Bible, when you use this word "naos," it is in reference to what, in the Old Testament temple, was called "the inner sanctum" – the Holy of Holies. In front, you remember, was the holy place. When it says the "naos," it is referring to that inner sanctum of the Holy of Holies where God met with the high priest of the Jewish people. Here it is where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit met as the triune God in the Holy of Holies with the leaders of Israel.

So, this is interesting that this is the word which is used here to indicate that these people are going to be serving in God's heavenly throne room, which is where John sees them standing. They are not referring to some kind of an earthly building. They observed that God is there. He is sitting upon His throne. He's in that position of authority on His throne. We are told that all of these martyrs (and eventually we would share this with them) are going to dwell, such that: "God that sits on the throne shall dwell among them." This is a bad translation in the King James Bible, because this is the word "skenoo" in the Greek language, and "skenoo" does not mean "to dwell." "Skenoo" means to pitch a tent – to pitch a tent over somebody. This word recalls again an image, as these images keep reflecting other portions of Scripture.

Isaiah 4:5-6 (which the Jewish readers would be well-acquainted with) describes the condition of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom: "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon the assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, recalling that which led them as their sign out of Egypt, for upon all the glory shall be a defense, and there shall be a tabernacle, a tent for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for cover from the storm and from the rain."

So, Isaiah is talking here about the very picture that you have in Revelation – that God Himself is going to come and cover these people, as if you set a canopy out (like a tent) to protect people from the heat and from the rain. This tent is going in the immediate presence of God here in his "naos," in the presence of the Holy of Holies, where the Shekinah glory dwelt. This is the same idea of the divine presence that you have in Ezekiel: "My tabernacle also shall be with them. Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people." This is the same idea – that God's is going to be over them, and that's how we would translate this: "Shall spread His tent over them," which will be as a temple. This is in the future. It's future tense. It's after the great tribulation era is over. It's active. God himself says that He will do this for them. It's indicative – a statement of fact. So, God is going to shelter these martyrs in heaven with His own presence.

"And He will be among them." The word "among" is this Greek preposition "epi" which means "over." He will be over them like a tent, or like a mother hen who puts her wings around her chicks. So, this is a very happy scene in heaven. It's in stark contrast, I remind you, of the nightmare that's taking place at the same time down on earth under the antichrist. We have a God who is going to spread His tent over these people who suffered so much.

It's an encouragement to us to remember that God does not forget your works of love. That's what the Bible says. He does not forget your works of love. We have a lot of that around Berean Memorial Church. There are people who are performing works of love, standing by with faithfulness. And when they see a gap, they are the kinds of people that these martyrs were who moved in, and who took upon themselves the responsibility of testifying, and the responsibility of serving God. And God says that of those of you who are doing that, He is not a mindful of that. Sometimes you take a burden when you're already a burdened in this ministry. Just remember that when you do, God has spread His tent over you. And those of you who choose not to stand in the gap, you have just removed yourself from the very special kind of covering that the Lord has for those who stand in the gap.

John is very excited and very thrilled over what he sees that God has done for these people. But the Lord is not through yet. In the final two verses, this divine provision comes to a climax that must have absolutely astounded John in terms of what these people had gone through, but what God was now going to do for them. Their future, at this point, in time is someday going to be our experience as well.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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