

The Identity of the Great Crowd in Heaven

By Robert I. Adams

In Revelation 7, the apostle John recorded what he saw in heaven:

"I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands." (Rev. 7:9)

Who are these people? And how did they get to stand before God's throne in heaven?

An elder in heaven wanted John to know the identity of these people, so he said to him, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" (Rev. 7:13). John answered: "Sir, you know" (Rev. 7:14). Then the elder said: "These are the ones who *come out of the great tribulation*, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God" (Rev. 7:14-15).

We are told that these people "come out of the great tribulation." This means they had been in the great tribulation and came out of it. We can see some of what they had experienced in the great tribulation from what the elder then told John about them. He said, "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore" (Rev. 7:16). This means they had suffered hunger and thirst. In a later vision that concerns the great tribulation itself, John was told that at this time the saints will not be able to buy anything without taking the mark of the beast (cf. Rev. 13:17). The saints will therefore be prone to lack food and drink, and therefore they will suffer hunger and thirst.

The elder also said to John, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:17). This indicates that their anguish and distress will be over when they come out of the great tribulation.

The people who comprise the large crowd before the throne in heaven have clearly been in the great tribulation. But how did they get to heaven? To arrive at a plausible answer, let's begin by taking note of what the elder said to John: "These are the ones who *come out of the great tribulation*" (Rev. 7:14). The Greek verb translated, "come out" is a present participle indicating an ongoing action. The text literally says, "are coming." Young's Literal Translation renders it, "These are those who are coming out of the great tribulation." Thus, in John's vision the people of the large crowd who are assembled before the throne in heaven are actually in the process of coming out of the great tribulation. We will get back to the significance of this later on.

Notice how they are dressed; we are told they are "clothed with white robes" (Rev. 7:9). Let's compare this to what it says in the previous chapter, where John records:

"When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been 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, until You judge and

avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then *a white robe* was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." (Rev. 6:9-11)

Here, we see martyred saints in heaven in the end time who are clothed with white robes. They are told their number is not yet complete. It follows therefore, that we would expect to see a large crowd in heaven clothed with white robes. And that is what we see in the next chapter - a large crowd in heaven clothed with white robes that has been in the great tribulation. This means that the large crowd we see in Revelation 7 is comprised of martyrs from the great tribulation. They come out of the great tribulation by being martyred throughout that time.

The large crowd derives from "all *nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues*" (Rev. 7:9). We can compare this to what we are told about the beast, i.e. the Antichrist, in a later vision in the book of Revelation. In chapter 13, we read, "Authority was given him over every *tribe, tongue, and nation*" (Rev. 13:7). The same verse says, "It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them." What is implied here is that the Antichrist will wage war against the saints of "every tribe, tongue, and nation." He will endeavor to kill as many saints as he can during the great tribulation, and that is why the martyrs come from "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues." At the end of the great tribulation, these martyrs from many different countries will constitute a large crowd in heaven, as John saw.

We can see that the scene John describes of the large crowd is at the end of the great tribulation by comparing what it says in Revelation 7 to what we read in Revelation 19.

In Revelation 7:9-10, it says:

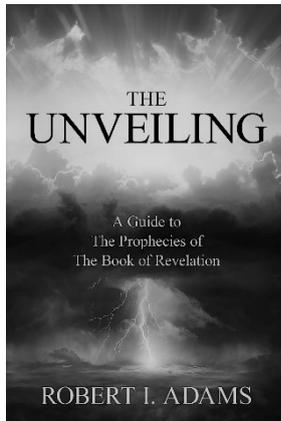
"After these things I looked, and behold, *a great multitude* which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, *saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God* who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

In Revelation 19:1, we read:

"After these things I heard a loud voice of *a great multitude* in heaven, *saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!'*"

The scene is so similar that we have every reason to assume that the same crowd is described. The timing in chapter 19 is just before Christ comes back on a white horse in verse 11. And when this happens, the martyrs, who are portrayed in chapter 6 and 7, will be resurrected together with all those who died as believers. They will accompany Jesus from heaven, and receive their new bodies. Paul wrote that at the return of Christ, "God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:14), and went on to say, "And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16).

For more insight concerning the end time, you are welcome to view a book/eBook I have written entitled "THE UNVEILING – A Guide to the Prophecies of the Book of Revelation"



This publication shows what the last book of the Bible says about the world in the end time, the return of Jesus, and the coming kingdom of God. An oversight of the book of Revelation is provided, together with a viable chronology, as well as a detailed commentary on every verse.

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