

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Visions of Praise**

November 2021

Fall Quarter

**November 6, 2021**

## **Lesson #1 –United in Praise**

### **Scripture Focus – Revelation 7:9-17**

#### **ICE BREAKER –**

1. *What is the difference between singing a hymn and singing an ordinary song?*
2. *What are ways to increase the quality and consistency of your praise life to the Lord?*

***Key Verse: I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—Revelation 7:14***

#### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Some Christians believe the book of Revelation speaks only of the future. Others believe the book speaks in coded language about the people and events of the first century AD. Still others believe the book is figurative or symbolic, using vivid imagery to teach spiritual lessons. Then there's the issue of separate approaches to sections consisting of chapters 1–3; 4–19, and 20–22!

No matter the interpretive perspective, three things should be observed by careful readers. First, Revelation is a combination of a letter, prophecy, and apocalyptic text. It is considered partially a letter, because of how the book opens with a greeting (Revelation 1:4–7) and is addressed to specific churches (see chapters 2 and 3). Revelation is considered a form of prophecy (1:3), given to John in order that he might declare the “testimony of Jesus Christ” (1:9). Revelation is also considered an apocalyptic text. During the era in which John recorded his revelation, apocalyptic texts were commonplace. This was a highly stylized type of literature written to unveil God’s plan for the world, both in the past and for the future.

Apocalyptic literature often presents this plan through vivid and cryptic imagery. A proper understanding of Revelation requires recognizing the imagery and language of apocalyptic literature (compare Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 13:24–27; Luke 21:25–28).

Second, the book of Revelation is loaded with allusions to the Old Testament and assumes the audience’s familiarity with their source (compare Isaiah 6:1–3; Ezekiel 1:18, 22, 26–28; and Revelation 4). Revelation rests on the shoulders of Genesis (Genesis 1:1; see Revelation 21:1), Exodus (Exodus 19:6; see Revelation 1:5–6), Daniel (Daniel 7:13; see Revelation 1:7, 13; 14:14), and even Psalms (Psalm 2:9; see Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). The fullest understanding of Revelation recognizes its roots in the Old Testament.

Third, Revelation emphasizes worshipping God. The text is filled with poetic scenes of worship (see Revelation 4:8; 5:9–13; 7:10–17; 11:15–18; 12:10–12;

15:3–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–8). Each one makes claims about who is worthy to be worshipped in Heaven and on earth. Revelation calls the people to worship “God which sitteth upon the throne” and “the Lamb” (7:10, below).

Today’s passage continues John’s vision of Heaven. Several startling events have occurred: the glorious entry of the Lamb into the throne room (Revelation 5:6) and the introduction of a sealed scroll and its opening (5:1; 6:1–17), leading to the dramatic gathering of the servants of God (7:1–8). John then turned his attention to the great multitude of people and witnessed their worship.

## **LESSON COMMENTARY**

### **The Nations Worshiping in Heaven (7:9–17)**

**7:9–12.** The meaning of **after these things** (v. 9) is not clear. It may connect the innumerable persons gathered before the Father with the bond-servants above. Were the 144,000 evangelists who had witnessed to the great throng? Perhaps it is better to take the words as simply shifting the focus to a new scene in heaven. Their **white robes** may indicate martyrdom (6:11). **Palm branches** were often instruments of praise (see the comments on Mt 21:4–9). Their song blessed and thanked God for His perfections.

**7:13–17.** A rhetorical question leads to the identification of the multitude (v. 13). Their white garments identify them as beneficiaries of redemption through the shed blood of the Lamb (v. 14). Assuming that the rapture of the Church occurs before the **tribulation** (see 3:10), these must be converted after its onset. Their sudden appearance in heaven suggests that they are martyrs. They would never suffer again. Rather, they would enjoy eternity with the One **who sits on the throne** (v. 15). Every physical and spiritual need would be met by God the Father who will shelter them. The very center of their existence would be the **Lamb**, their **shepherd** (v. 17). He would tenderly lead them to ultimate refreshment (Ps 23:1–2; Jn 10:1–8) and **wipe every tear from their eyes**, bringing relief from the terrors that they had suffered for Him on the earth. The persecuted believers of the seven churches no doubt took great comfort from this passage. Should they suffer at the hand of Domitian, they too would one day experience ultimate blessing with the Lamb. Until then, they would have to persevere. Modern believers should take note that suffering in this life, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual, will one day yield to unfathomable bliss. What an encouragement!

**LESSON NUGGET** – It is difficult to imagine how blood could make any cloth white, but the blood of Jesus Christ is the world’s greatest purifier because it removes the stain of sin (Hebrews 9:14). White symbolizes sinless perfection or holiness, which can be given to people only by the death of the sinless Lamb of God on their behalf. This is a picture of how believers are saved through faith (see Isaiah 1:18; Romans 3:21–26).

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Life Application notes, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary.*