

- † **White Robes** This is the victory celebration of the redeemed. The pure white robe represents the righteousness of God bestowed upon His people by virtue of the redemption accomplished in His blood (cf. v.14).
- † **Palm Branches** Palm branches occur only twice in the New Testament, here in Revelation 7, and in the account of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem (John 12:13). The use of palms figured prominently in the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles which commemorated Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:40; Nehemiah 8:13-17). . . **Palm branches signify victory over an enemy**... symbols of God's protection of them during their wilderness pilgrimage through the great tribulation." Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.196-197
- † Palm fronds were symbols of victory. Seven seven times in 7 letters the Savior made a promise to those were victorious (Revelation 2-3). The palm branches identify these multitudes as the victorious ones, as those who have overcome. Becker, p.127

7:10-12 The *Te Deum* of Revelation

A reference to the liturgical hymn beginning *Te Deum Laudamus*, "We praise Thee, O God," sung at matins or on special occasions such as a thanksgiving.

The magnificent heavenly hymn of praise which began with the four living beings in chapter 4 is continued by the saints. **This ongoing doxology is "the great *Te Deum* of Revelation".**

- † The great *Te Deum* of Revelation is a hymn of praise to God for his creation of all life and for his salvation of his people through the victory of the Lamb. It stanzas are sung at various times and places throughout the Book. It begins with the singing of "**holy, holy, holy,**" in the vision of God's heavenly glory and of the ascension, coronation, and enthronement of the Lamb (4:1-5:14). It concludes with the Hallelujah Chorus in the vision of the bride of Christ at the end (19:1-10)
- † This *Te Deum* presents a response from both the saints of God and the angelic hosts to God's salvation. **The lasting impression is given that this is the greatest activity and work of God's saints and angels is the voicing and singing of His praises...**

Te Deum Laudamus

Lutheran Worship #8

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
 All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.
 To Thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens and all the powers therein.
 To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy:
 Lord God of Sabaoth;
 Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory.
 The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.
 The godly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.
 The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.
 The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee;
 The Father of an infinite Majesty;
 Thine honourable, true, and only Son;
 Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.
 Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
 Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
 When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man:
 Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
 When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
 Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
 Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.
 We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.
 We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants
 whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
 Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting.
 O Lord, save Thy people: and bless Thine heritage.
 Govern them and lift them up for ever.
 Day by day we magnify Thee; and we worship Thy Name,
 ever world without end.
 Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
 O Lord, have mercy upon us.
 O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in Thee.
 O Lord, in Thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

See this video for the tune and singing of it:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW889psVIJ4>

- † The picture presented in Revelation is that of one grand service of worship whose participants include the saints on earth, still suffering in warfare, as well as the saints and angels in glory. This worship also has a timeless quality, as though all who participate are engaged in the eternal service of God, regardless of whether they are, for the moment, still on earth, or whether they are in heaven. Striking too is the unity of this corporate worship; all participating voices blend in perfect harmony. Revelation, Brighton, p. 527
- † In this verse of the song, the great multitude of the redeemed joyfully acknowledges God and the Lamb as **the only source and basis of their salvation**. The Greek text literally says - “*They kept on powerfully crying out with a great voice...*” The forceful language emphasizes not only the duration but also the intensity and the enthusiasm of this song of praise.

The substance of the doxology which follows is a thundering series of seven attributions of greatness to God.

- ✓ “**Praise**” literally means “to speak well of,” hence, “a word of blessing or praise.”
- ✓ “**Glory**” is the honor derived from having earned a good reputation.
- ✓ “**Wisdom**” is the divine knowledge of God demonstrated in His plan of salvation.
- ✓ “**Thanks**” denotes gratitude based on the words “well” and “to give freely.”
- ✓ “**Honor**” is the recognition and esteem due one who has accomplished an important work.
- ✓ “**Power**” is the irresistible strength, the omnipotence which pertains to God alone and which overcomes any and all opposition.
- ✓ “**Strength**” refers to innate ability demonstrated in great acts of heroism and deliverance.

The final **AMEN!** affirms the truthfulness and validity of all that which has been declared about God.

7:13-14 The Explanation of the Multitude

An elder steps forward to pose a question to John. This is a common device in Old Testament prophecy to offer an explanation of the meaning of the vision (cf. Jeremiah 1:11,13; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Zechariah 4:2,5). **Only two of the visions of Revelation receive a detailed explanation, the white robed multitude here in Revelation 7 and the judgment of the harlot of Babylon in Revelation 17.**

- † “**Sir, you know**” John’s response is identical to that of the prophet Ezekiel in the vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:3). The elder then proceeds to answer his own inquiry, thus providing the information for the reader.



7:14 Great Tribulation

The Bible teaches that constant, ongoing, tribulation will characterize the entire New Testament era. St Paul warns Timothy:

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days...In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted while evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:1,12-13)

Scripture warns that the tribulation of God’s people will grow ever more intense as the world moves closer to judgment, culminating in a last desperate outburst of bitter opposition and persecution on the eve of the Last Day.

“There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is written in the book - will be delivered.” (Daniel 12:1)

Our Lord also refers to Daniel’s prophecy (Matthew 24:15) and warns of *“the great tribulation”* (Matthew 24: 21) that is coming during the evil days immediately preceding the Judgment. The bitter intensity of that ultimate tribulation will be such that *“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened.”* (Matthew

24:22) Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.201-203

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The **false teaching** is that God’s People will face a “great tribulation” immediately before Christ returns. (Some teach that the Rapture will “rescue” God’s People so that they will not have to face this.) This position holds that the tribulation has *not yet started*. They teach that the tribulation is a future event that will last only seven years.

The **true teaching** from the Bible is that the “great tribulation” is neither a future event nor a seven year period. Instead, the great tribulation refers to the persecution and suffering God’s People have, and always will, face in this corrupt world *during the entire End Times*.

† It is crucial to note, however, that the great tribulation that is to come in the future is but a continuation of what has already begun. Jesus tells us that the distress surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, God’s judgment upon apostate Israel in 70 AD, will serve as a preview of His judgment upon all of mankind at the end of time. In the same way, **all of the opposition and tribulation that believers will experience throughout the New Testament era are a part of and point forward to “THE GREAT TRIBULATION” which has already begun and is still to come.**

John, along with other inspired New Testament writers, argues that the fulfillment of the end times prophecies of the Old Testament began with the first coming of Christ and will continue until the day of His second coming (John 5:24-29; cf. also Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:1-7,12-13) The language of the text in Revelation 7 strongly suggests that the tribulation in question here is not to be equated with or limited to the ultimate tribulation just before the End. **Rather, this is the ongoing tribulation which will characterize the entire New Testament period.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.203-204

† The Greek literally says - *“they who are coming out of the great tribulation.”* This is a **continuous process** which describes the deliverance of all of the saints throughout the New Testament era.

✓ Every time one of the 144,000 who are marked with the seal of God dies, he comes out of the “great tribulation.” ... The present participle indicates that day by day this multitude is growing as additional believing children of God reach the heavenly mansions through the portals of death.

Becker, p.124, 128

† Note also the preposition *“out of”* which indicates that the saints who are being delivered were **IN** the great tribulation. This contradicts notions of a secret rapture designed to enable the church to evade the tribulation period. In order to have come *“out of the great tribulation”* you must first have been in it. Millennialist fantasies about a seven year tribulation period preceded by a secret rapture of the saints and followed by a 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth find no support in this passage nor elsewhere in Scripture. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.203-205

† “We ought not expect to be treated differently than any other. Being a Christian does not mean we are excused from life and its troubles. Otherwise, churches would have waiting lists for joiners.” “Lutheran Church of the Epiphany” notes on Revelation

† **“The world continues to exist because the church is in the world. Otherwise heaven and earth would burst into a conflagration in a moment; for the world, being full of blasphemy and godlessness, is not worth one grain of wheat. But because the church is in the midst of the godless, God for her sake permits them also to enjoy the common blessings of life; and whatever the world has, it has for the sake of the church.”**

What Luther Says, p. 1527-1528, Concordia Publishing House, 1959.



7:14 The Victory is in Christ!

The victory of those who now stand before the throne was accomplished “*in the blood of the Lamb.*” Through the sacrificial death of Christ, they have received the forgiveness of their sins and are able to stand before God in the righteousness of Christ.

† “The active Greek verbs ‘*washed*’ and ‘*made white*’ (7:14) with the people as the subject suggest that the saints did the washing. They were the recipients of God’s grace, with the result that as they held to Christ in repentance and faith they washed their garments and made them white in His blood by means of Word and Sacrament. . . . Since salvation is by grace alone, it is impossible for a person to wash himself or his clothes so as to actively achieve the forgiveness of sins. God alone can turn scarlet sins to white (Isaiah 1:18). God must wash the sinner clean from sin ...Therefore, when God calls the people to wash themselves clean from sin or “*to be baptized and wash away your sins* (Acts 22:16)”, and when Christians are described as having washed their robes (Revelation 7:14; 22:14), ***it is always with the theological understanding that God is the one who instills the desire, prompts the action and accomplishes the result: forgiven sins and eternal glory.***” Brighton, pp. 200- This is the “analogy of faith” ≈ Scripture interprets Scripture

7:14 The Blood of the Lamb

This phrase signifies the blood of Christ poured out upon the cross, that is, the redemptive death of Jesus for the sins of mankind. This theme is carried though later in Revelation 19:13 where John says of Jesus: “*He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and His Name is the Word of God.*”

Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.209



7:15ff The Bliss of Heaven

A breathtaking series of **TEN PHRASES** describes the complete bliss of the saints in heaven. The wording indicates that the blessings which the saint enjoy in heaven are the result of their having been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. The price of our entry into the heavenly realms is the death of Jesus. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.209

15 Therefore,
“they are **before the throne** of God
and **serve Him day and night** in His temple; and He who sits
on the throne will **shelter them with His presence**.

16 ‘**Never** again will they **hunger**;
never again will they **thirst**.
The sun will **not** **beat down** on them,
nor any **scorching heat**.

17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be
their Shepherd;
He will **lead them to springs of living water**.’
And God will **wipe away** every tear from their eyes.’ ”

The **first three phrases** emphasize that which the theologians call the “**Beatific Vision**” (*the sight which brings joy*). **TO BE IN HEAVEN IS TO BE IN THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF GOD**, restored to the harmony and intimacy with the Creator for which we were fashioned in the beginning.

Heaven is presented as a Great Temple, the dwelling place of God, and all of the saints are the priests of God who worship and adore Him. Their experience of God is permanent -- it will go on throughout all of eternity.

In the Old Testament, in the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, God deigned to **Dwell** between the cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies. Now God dwells among us in the person of His Son who is the Word of God made flesh. In the heavenly temple we will live forever in the immediate presence of the Father, He will “**spread His tent**” over us.

These **next four phrases** present the bliss of heaven in terms of *freedom from the effects and consequences of sin*. **No hunger, thirst, sun burn, nor scorching heat** Behind the physical language of the text is the more fundamental reality of the perfect satisfaction of all man’s needs, both spiritual and physical, in Christ. As Jesus declared after the feeding of the five thousand: “**I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never grow hungry and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty...I am the Bread that came down from heaven**.” (John 6:35,41) The language of Revelation 7 is drawn from Isaiah’s promise of restoration to Israel in **Isaiah 49:9-10**. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.212-213

17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd;
'He will **lead** them to springs of living water.'"
And God will **wipe away** every tear from their eyes.' ”

The **last three phrases** focus on **Christ the Good Shepherd**. The Old Testament had promised that God would care for His people as a loving shepherd protects and provides for his flock (Psalm 23). The image of Christ as the fulfillment of those promises, the Good Shepherd of His people the Church, is a familiar one in the New Testament (cf. John 10:11,14). To be the Shepherd is to accept responsibility for the life and well-being of the sheep. John here adjusts the imagery in an intriguing way as **the Lamb becomes the Shepherd of the sheep**.

- ✓ The compassionate care of the Shepherd is indicated by His ability to lead the flock “to springs of **living water**.” In His conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well Jesus declares: “**Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**” (John 4:14)
- ✓ To live with God in heaven under the care of the Good Shepherd is to be liberated from all sorrow and care --- “**And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.**” This poignant image comes from **Isaiah 25:7-8**. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.213-215

Bliss in Heaven

Just as the Shekinah, the cloud of God’s presence hovered over the Tabernacle and over the Mercy seat in the Old Testament ... thus the presence of God will overshadow the Elect in heaven, in order to be united with them in intimate fellowship and to satisfy them with the rich gifts at his house.

Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, p.615

What a blessed lot has now fallen to them! They have exchanged this world of sin and suffering for the glorious abode in heaven, where they dwell with God in perfect joy and peace forever ... all troubles and sorrows are past forever. God wipes away all tears and substitutes for them joys and pleasures forever more. Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Revelation*, p.27-28

This seen of God’ Elect and redeemed people enjoying the bliss of Heaven must have been a source of encouragement to persevere in those days of bitter persecution. It is still a source of encouragement, Comfort and hope today as we in the sufferings of this present time wait for the glory that shall be revealed in us. Becker, *Revelation*, p.131

