

THE FATE OF BELIEVERS IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION (PART II): A COUNTLESS NUMBER OF PEOPLE WILL BE SAVED REVELATION 07:09–17

Introduction

Who shall be saved during the awful tribulation coming upon earth? The terrible tribulation is coming in the end time, right before the end of the world. The time will be so terrible that one fourth of the earth's population will be destroyed by war, famine, pestilence, hunger and starvation. It will be a time so terrible that the Bible calls it the period of Death and Hades (Hell). But remember this is just the beginning. There is to be a time of so much horror and fright that it can only be called the *great tribulation*. When it comes there will be no end to the destruction and loss of life.

The important question is this: Is there any hope? Is there any way that people can be saved during this period of great tribulation? Yes! There will be a countless multitude of believers saved.

- I. Their origin: everywhere (v. 9).
- II. Their glorious position (vv. 9-10).
- III. Their glorious companions (vv. 11-12).
- IV. Their identity: An elder asks John for the multitudes' identity (vv. 13-14).
- V. Their function: To serve God continuously (v. 15).
- VI. Their blessings: bliss (vv. 15-17).

I. Revelation 07:09 Salvation and the Saved

There is the origin of the countless numbers. Who are they? They are people from everywhere (cp. Rev. 5:9).

- => From all nations: all, not just some; not even most, but from all nations.
- => From all tribes: there will not be a tribe from any place on earth left out. All tribes will have some people within them who will be saved in the great tribulation.
- => From all peoples: there will not be a people who will not have some saved from among them.
- => From all languages: there will not be a language from which there will not be some saved.

During the *great tribulation* there will be people who will turn to Christ by the millions. As terrible as the birth pains or sorrows and woes will be, the destruction and devastation will apparently stir people by the teeming millions to turn to Christ. This is glorious news:

it means that the greatest revival in the history of the world will take place during the tribulation coming upon earth. Just imagine: “a great multitude that no one could count” — teeming millions standing before the throne of God in heaven. And as we shall see in a few moments, they come out of the terrible tribulation upon earth. There will be people saved during those awful days.

Thought 1. This means a most glorious thing: God never shuts the door against anyone who wills to give his heart and life to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mat 8:11 “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

Rom 10:13 For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

1 Tim 2:4 Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Rev 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Rev 14:4-5 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

Rev 19:6-7 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

II. Revelation 07:09–10 The Glorious Position of the Saved

There is the glorious position of the countless multitude. Note the four facts given about them.

1. They stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. They have the most glorious of privileges:
 - => to be near God and Christ
 - => to be face to face with God and Christ
 - => to be honoured with the very presence of God and Christ
 - => to know God and Christ in all Their fullness and being

2. They are clothed with white robes. This means they have been made pure and free from all the blemishes of sin and from all the corruption of the world — all by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It means they have been perfected and stand before God perfected. The white robe of righteousness is...

- a sign of righteousness through Christ
- a sign of being made free from the defilement and smut of sin through Christ
- a sign of the victory over sin, death and judgment through Christ
- a sign of being perfected forever through Christ
- a sign of being a heavenly creature, of having the glorious privilege of living forever in the presence of God through Christ.

3. They hold palm branches in their hands. The palms are symbols of celebration, triumph, victory, deliverance and joy. The redeemed before God celebrate their triumph over the terrible tribulation and the sin, evil, death and corruption of the world.

=> They celebrate their victory in Christ.

=> They celebrate their deliverance in Christ.

=> They celebrate their joy in Christ.

4. They shout praises for their salvation. Note what it is that they shout:

Rev 7:10 *And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”*

They praise God for salvation. They praise God...

- because God has saved and delivered them through the great trials upon earth.
- because God has given them the power to believe and to endure to the end.
- because God has accepted them.
- because God has given them the glorious privilege of His presence.
- because God has completed their salvation, perfected them forever and ever with His glory.

Thought 1. William Barclay has a statement about this point that is a dynamic challenge to us. His words should stir us to endure any trial or temptation, no matter how severe:

“God is the great saviour, the great rescuer, the great deliverer of His people. And the deliverance which God gives is the greatest deliverance of all, for it is not the deliverance of escape; it is the deliverance of conquest. It is not the deliverance which saves a man from trouble it is the deliverance which brings a man triumphantly through trouble. It does not make life easy, but it certainly makes life great. It is not part of the Christian hope to look for a life in which a man is saved from all trouble and distress; the Christian hope is that a man in Christ can endure any kind of

trouble and distress, and remain erect all through them, and come out to glory on the other side” (The Revelation of John, Vol. 2. “The Daily Study Bible.” Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1959, p. 32).

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:32 *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

2 Cor 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

Eph 2:8 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Titus 2:11-12 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

Heb 13:15 *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

1 Pet 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

III. Revelation 07:11–12 The Glorious Company of the Saved

There are the companions of the countless multitude. This is a picture of all those who stand before the throne of God with the numberless multitude. It is the picture of wave after wave of different beings standing in circles before the throne of God.

=> The outer circle is the angels. Note that they surround or encircle the throne.

=> Next come the twenty-four elders.

=> Then there are the four living creatures who stand at the four corners of the throne.

=> Finally, as we have seen, there is the countless multitude of believers who stand face to face with the throne of God and the Lamb.

The countless multitude has just sung their praises to God for His great salvation. When they do, the rest of the heavenly beings fall down before the throne on their faces and worship God.

1. They praise God for His *praise*. Every good and perfect gift comes from God. These heavenly beings acknowledge this fact and praise God’s name for it.

2. They praise God for His *glory*. God is glorious, the most glorious Person in all the universe. He is so glorious that His glory outshines the sun. It is the light of His glory that will provide the light of heaven. God is to be praised for the perfection of His glory. But note: God shares His glory with His creatures. Every creature in heaven is given and perfected in glory. God is to be praised for the gift of His glory as well as for His own glory.
3. They praise God for His *wisdom*. God is the *Supreme and Majestic Intelligence* of the universe. He is omniscient, possessing all intelligence and perfect intelligence. It is God who planned creation and all the worlds and creatures of all dimensions whoever they are. It is God who planned salvation and redemption through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God who has the knowledge to work all things out for good. He is to be praised for His wisdom.
4. They offer thanksgiving to God. They thank Him for creation, life, salvation, redemption and for everything else. Again, they know that every good and perfect gift came from Him.
5. They praise God for His *honour*. God is the Supreme and Majestic Being of the universe. There is none like Him. In addition, God is faithful and true. He never fails to keep His Word and promises nor to do what is best. He is the perfection of honour and truth and trustworthiness. Therefore, God's honour is praised.
6. They praise God for His *power*. God is the Supreme and Majestic Force of the universe. He is the Force that created the universe and that sustains and holds it together and that is moving it toward its destined end. In addition, God is the Supreme Force that works out the salvation and redemption of man and that works out all things for good to those who love Him. He is the Supreme Power who oversees our lives and delivers us from evil, death and corruption. Therefore, God is praised for His power.
7. They praise God for His *strength*. God is strong; He never tires or becomes weary. There is no weakness in Him whatever. God is so strong that He is always able to help any of His creatures. Anyone can approach God anytime for strength and receive His help. God never fails; He possesses perfect strength and shall possess it forever and ever. Therefore, God's strength is praised.

Thought 1. The praise of heavenly beings is an example for us. Scripture is clear: we are always to be thanking and praising God.

Heb 13:15 *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

1 Pet 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Cor 6:20 You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Col 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

1 Th 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Psa 9:11 Sing praises to the LORD, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.

Psa 67:3 May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.

IV. Revelation 07:13–14 The Identity of the Saved

There is the identity of the countless numbers. Note that the countless people have not yet been identified. Now they are. John is stunned by the sight and praise of the heavenly scene. He just stands there in stark amazement and stone silence, unable to think. To stir him, one of the elders walks over and asks John who the countless people are. Of course, John does not know, but the elder does. He was only arousing John out of his stunned state of mind. John does all he can do; he simply replies, "Sir, you know who they are." It is then that the elder tells John what he is witnessing. Remember: this scene has not yet happened. God is giving John a vision of things that are to happen in the future. The day is coming when a countless number, apparently millions, will stand before God having just entered heaven. Who are they? Two things are said about them.

1. They are *believers* out of the great tribulation. Shocking! But a great multitude, which no man could number – millions of believers – will die from the holocaust in the great tribulation.

Note: this is exactly what Scripture says. There will be millions of believers in the great tribulation, a mass of believers that no man can number. The devastation and destruction taking place will cause millions from all over the world to turn to Christ.

Now observe closely: they are in heaven, not on earth. This means that the antichrist has killed them. He has launched an all out attack against Christ, attempting to wipe the believer from off the face of the earth. This is clearly described by Scripture.

=> Daniel predicted this terrible time of trouble.

Dan 12:1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. 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 found written in the book – will be delivered.

=> Jesus Christ foretold that the *great distress, the great tribulation* was coming upon the earth.

Mat 24:21-22 *“For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equalled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”*

=> Paul described the attacks of the antichrist against Christ and all religions.

2 Th 2:3-4 *Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

=> John says that the antichrist will actually make war against the saints (believers) of God.

Rev 13:7 *He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.*

=> John says that the purpose of the antichrist is to set up the worship of the state as the first loyalty of the citizens of the world. (This will be the means the government will use to hold the people together under one government.)

Rev 13:15 *He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.*

The point is this: in the *great tribulation* the government of the antichrist will launch an all out attack against Christ and His followers. (The attack will also be against all people who have a strong religious faith, including Jews, Moslems, Hindus and others.) A believer will have to deny Christ or else be put to death. Millions – all those who are true believers – will refuse. They will refuse for the same reason any true believer would refuse: because they love the Lord with all their heart, and because they have the glorious hope of living with Christ forever and ever, worshipping and serving Him in perfection throughout all of eternity.

2. They are those who have washed their robes white. How? In the blood of the Lamb. The clothing of all heavenly beings is coloured white. White stands for purity and perfection. It means that the person has no spot of sin, evil or corruption in him. He is clean and pure from all defilement and sin and imperfection. Therefore, white stands for perfection, for sinless perfection, for perfect righteousness.

But note a critical fact: no person upon earth is sinless, righteous, perfect, pure or incorruptible. Every person sins, and every person is corruptible. We all die and end up in the grave. How then did these martyrs – the believers of the countless multitude – get white robes? This verse tells us:

Rev 7:14 *They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (See pt. 2, Lamb of God, Rev. 5:6-7.)*

V. Revelation 07:15 The Function of the Saved

There is the function of the countless multitude. They serve God continually, day and night. The temple here means the very presence of God, the most holy place in all the universe, heaven itself. It means to have direct access into the presence of God anytime, anyplace. The picture is this:

- => Believers will be perfected so that they never tire or become weary or need sleep. They will be able to serve and work continuously day and night.
- => Believers will serve God: they will be ruling and reigning throughout the universe, overseeing the new heavens and earth for Christ.

Mat 19:28 *Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

Mat 25:23 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*

Luke 12:42-44 *The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”*

Luke 19:17, 19 *“‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’”*

Rom 8:17 *Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

2 Tim 2:12 *If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*

1 Cor 6:2-3 *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

Rev 5:10 *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

VI. Revelation 07:15–17 The Blessings of the Saved

There are the blessings and bliss of the countless multitude.

1. They will have the living presence of God with them forever.
=> The presence of God will actually be manifested to the believer unceasingly. God will be dwelling, living, moving and having His being in the believer in an unbroken communion and fellowship.
2. They will have all their physical needs met. Hunger and thirst stand for all the physical necessities of life that they lacked when upon earth. Many of these dear believers will suffer terribly. They will be placed in extermination camps by the antichrist and his government. They will be starved to death. Some will be forced to flee their homes and belongings. They will starve to death while trying to scratch food out of the forests. The picture of how a war-torn, persecuted people suffering starvation and thirst is well known to the modern world. Such scenes are often seen on television. But in heaven the believers will have all their needs met.
3. They will be protected. This is the symbol of the sun and heat. The prison and labour camps of a persecuted and war-torn people is the picture here. The picture would also include the homeless who have to wander about exposed to the elements of nature. Scorching heat and frigid cold will take the lives of many. But in heaven, they will be protected from all enemies, even from the sun and heat.
4. They will have all their spiritual needs met. The Lamb of God Himself shall shepherd the believers. He will feed them and meet all their needs. This refers to spiritual needs, the needs of the soul for life, love, joy, peace, security, completeness, fullness, assurance and confidence. Christ will feed the soul of the believer, (cp. Psa. 23:1f.).
5. They will have the leadership and direction of the Lord to guide them. There will never be another mistake or misstep taken. The Lamb of God Himself will give direction and guidance. He will assign the responsibilities and tell believers exactly what to oversee for Him, and they will joyfully do it. Serving Christ, being directed and guided by Him, will be like drinking from the fountain of living water.
6. They will have all sorrow wiped away from their eyes. Note by whom: God Himself shall wipe every tear from their eyes. In heaven believers shall never again suffer, not even a single pain or hurt. They shall be perfected forever.

Mat 5:6 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*

John 4:14 *“But 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 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

John 14:1-3 *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

2 Tim 4:8 *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

1 Pet 4:12-13 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Rev 21:4 *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

Isa 49:10 *They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. ■*