

Revelation 6-7

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[0:00] Thanks, Linda, if you want to keep your Bibles open. If you're just joining us for the first time, like I said earlier, we're working our way through the book of Revelation.

Just to give you a quick recap, John is writing to beleaguered believers in the first century who are facing real hardship. The government, the Roman government empire is not sympathetic to Christianity and is actively persecuting it at the time.

And under that, with that lack of sympathy in the culture and the people around, Christians are being tempted in all manner of ways. They're being tempted to give up, being tempted to compromise with the culture, just go along with it, be tempted to compromise morally and theologically.

They are also being martyred. They're being killed for their faith. And so John is writing to those who want to remain faithful, to be able to stand firm. And so the first several letters are written encouraging them in their walk to remain faithful, to trust in the one that they might overcome. And then we're sort of into the next chapters where Devin is shown just how they can overcome as they trust in the overcomer. They're given victory to the one who has victory over the grave and through the resurrection.

[1:20] And so we've been introduced to these kind of issues and then something of the solution. And then, of course, we're centered on the God who is sovereign, reigning all.

He has not lost control. He is working out his purposes. And we see then last week we were sort of introduced to Jesus, the one who is able to fulfill all that God has planned, all of his purposes. And so the next chapters, we're going to see just how those purposes are working out from the time of his first coming to the time of his second. And as we said last time, these chapters are not a sort of chronological view of what's going to happen.

Actually, there are several kind of looks at the same time period from different camera angles, if you like, in the same way as there are four Gospels looking at the life and events of Jesus, giving slightly different angles on his life and so on.

And so these next chapters, as we look at the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, will give us those different views. The next, as we sort of, in one sense, going from the early chapters into these chapters, it marks a little bit of a transition.

[2:33] As you're in community group, you'll notice things are starting to hot up in terms of how we sort of think about what's going on here and so on. But hopefully we're sort of being helped as we think, OK, OK, there are certain things that are key, not least that who is John writing to in the first place?

And why might this have been significant to them? And therefore, why is it significant to every generation of believers? We're also seeing that John uses a very specific type of writing, a particular genre, in which, for example, we see numbers are very significant.

The number seven is playing a big part in these chapters. Seven letters, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven seals and so on. We'll see the number 12 being significant to date.

And these things are important because it helps us to kind of not freak out about the passage, but realise, no, we can sort of see there's things going on here. In terms of the backdrop to kind of, again, keeping us from getting a little bit too excited in our interpretation is some of the words of Jesus.

And we said this previously. Jesus said, Matthew 24, 36, about the day nor the hour in terms of his return. No one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the sun, but only the father.

[3:50] So that keeps us from sort of fruitless speculation about it's going to be here, it's going to be then, it's going to be this and so on. No one knows, Jesus says. And so this is not about a

specific dates of the return of Christ.

And I think we don't need to look for that. We can be spared from that fruitless task. Also, I think it's helpful, especially in these passages, to reflect again on the words of Jesus.

John 16, 33, he said, So Jesus, in kind of preparing the early disciples, is saying, things are going to be tough.

You know, we live in a fallen world. We're not spared the things that are common to all men and women. Work is hard because of the fall. But also, you can expect hardship because not everyone will love the Christian faith that you profess.

But fear not, I'm with you. I've overcome the world and I'll help you to overcome and remain faithful. So Jesus gave fair warning of all of that. And really, I think we're seeing this kind of amplified and echoed these kind of sentiments in the book of Revelation.

[4:59] And of course, that's all, you know, there's some bleak stuff here in Revelation in the chapters that we're looking at. But of course, it's not all grim.

There are blue sky days and days for pickiness on. There's a lot of scope for joy in the Lord and enjoyment of what God has given us. But there is a backdrop that I think Jesus wants every believer to be clear about.

And I think it's really helpful in our discipleship. So let's unpack a little bit more of Revelation and what John's teaching us. So we're looking at these chapters and really they kind of break up into three sections, unsurprisingly.

There's the four horsemen. There's the martyr's cry in the day of the Lord. And then looking at those who can stand. So first of all, in sort of the first four seals, if you like, the four horsemen.

And again, you're seeing a kind of stylized form of writing. We're seeing repeated pattern. There's a hearing of a living creature saying, come. And what comes out, you know, is a horse and a rider and so on.

[6:07] And a series of judgments. And so that kind of repeats for the four seals, doesn't it? Verses one to two, we hear one of the living creatures saying, come. And charging the rider with a task.

Out comes the rider on the white horse. Some folks think that's Jesus because of a later vision of Jesus on the white horse. But in this context, you'll see that someone coming to war and to conquest.

And the white horse is symbolic of those who are leading the charge, as it were. And so this first judgment that is being sort of announced is that of conquest.

And we see a similar vision of horses in Zechariah 1, chapter 1, 18 to 17. We're not going to look it up now, but you might want to write it down if you want to do some extra homework on these things. And then the second seal is opened. He hears a living creature saying, come. And he sees a fire red horse. The rider takes away peace and is given a sword.

[7:09] And so red, symbolic of bloodshed. The second judgment is political tension. Tension between nations, conflict, war, and bloodshed. The third seal is opened, verse 5.

He hears a creature say, come. And out comes a black horse. The rider has a pair of scales, famine, economic hardship. The inequalities are the things, the judgments that are being brought here.

And then the fourth seal, there comes out a pale horse, the color of death or corpse. And the name of the rider is death and following after him is Hades or hell, close behind.

And with all of these things kind of happening, there's a quarter of the population are killed. So what is going on in these verses?

Well, like I said before, it's key that we remember who John is writing for in the first place. He's writing to first century believers to help them to stand in the midst of the difficulties that they are facing, not least the persecutions and the hardships all around.

[8:13] And they certainly would have been accustomed to many of the things that John is writing about in their time. You know, conquests, for example, between AD 68 and 69. And within one year, Rome had four successive Caesars.

Lots of conflict, lots of tension and so on all around. Famines, massive inflation and qualities and so on brought about by that and by unjust governance.

Governance, also death. There was a series of grain famines in AD 92. And of course, dotted over the centuries, plagues that wiped out huge numbers.

So these are things that they are familiar with, that we are familiar with as we look over history, but actually even in our own recent history.

So whilst the judgment at the end of time, which we're going to read about in the sixth seal, means that many of the judgments that God has are delayed until that day when the full accounting will be done.

[9:13] That does not mean that there is no ongoing judgment within the world on the sins of humanity. We read about that in Romans chapter 1, for example, in verse 24, where the crucial phrase, God gave them over.

You know, the particular context where it's about rebellion in the era of human sexuality, and God gave them over to these things. So in a sense, God is saying, if that's the way that you want to go, then I will no longer restrain you, on you go.

And that is the form of judgment and sort of reap the consequence of what you're sowing. And in many ways, so there are ongoing judgments throughout the whole of history.

I think we need to be very careful in terms of how we interpret these things. But I think the book of Revelation and the teaching of Jesus help us to sort of think, to not be surprised when these things happen.

That these are being part of a fallen world and part of kind of just being in rebellion against God. So in this fallen, rebellious world, as God gives humanity over to our desires, whether that's power or greed, deadly expansion, we will continue to kind of see these things ongoing.

[10:34] And we shouldn't be surprised. But in his mercy, we see even in that verse where the number is limited, those who are affected by it, he's keeping a check on things.

Even when there is judgment, he said, this far and no further. His judgments are just, but there is also mercy in the midst of it, as he keeps things within certain boundaries.

And again, we've seen this kind of thing before in the scriptures, in the Bible. Well, God used foreign powers, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, whilst on their conquest to expand their empires, they were used to humble and punish the people of God for their utter rebelliousness. But it was kept in check. So for example, with the Babylonians, they exiled the people of God into the Babylonian empire. But Jeremiah prophesied that they would return within 70 years, that the exile would not be forever, but there would be a limit to it.

And sure enough, God is true to his word. They returned 70 years afterwards. There was judgment, but there was also mercy in the midst of it. Merciful judgment to stop an even greater evil and wrong.

[11:46] And again, I think that as we look at these things, and the reason that these things are in the scripture, I think it's to calm the heart of troubled believers, so that we aren't surprised when these things happen.

We don't excessively worry. Of course, they are worrying things in the world, but we're not excessively worrying about them, thinking God has lost control. God is in control. And these things that are happening are part of kind of being in a fallen world.

And certainly we continue to see these things happening, don't we? War and conquest, economic as well as military. There's bloodshed. There's death in Ukraine and Gaza and Myanmar and Sudan, to name but a few epidemics, famines and so on.

So I think the message is, don't be surprised by these things. Do not feel God is not on his throne. Actually, his purposes are being worked out. We are not able to fathom them always.

But these are the general kind of principles that are at stake, that there is a judgment that are ongoing, that God has given us over to our desires and our hunger for power and so on.

[12:54] And so these things are a consequence. So when borders are threatened, when pension pots take a massive downturn, or nations rise against nation, do not be surprised.

Remember, our God is on his throne and he reigns, and his purposes are being worked out. And our hope, ultimately, is not in this life. And that's why there's so much speak of heaven in this, isn't it?

That is where the hope of the believer ultimately lies. And there's a sense in which these things, you know, it's a little bit grim.

But I think it makes sense of the reality that we experience, and sense of our kind of how we approach things, and how we approach situations in the world, how we understand them. Yes, we still pray for them.

Yes, we give to help in these disasters to alleviate the suffering and so on. But we have a sort of bigger sense of the backdrop of what is going on in the world.

[14:00] So I think, you know, the four seals, the four horsemen, help us in the midst of these things. And also encourage us, don't they, in the direction of Jesus, that in the midst of these things, where is our hope?

Where are we to turn to? And whom do we lean? We need to lean that little bit more on Jesus, don't we? And find in him our living hope in the midst of it all. And I think that's the encouragement that John wants to give to those early believers and the believers in every generation.

So that's the four horsemen. Quote next. So the martyrs cry in the day of the Lord. Verse nine.

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

They called out in a loud voice, how long, sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood. So these are those who have been martyred unjustly for naming the name of Jesus, refusing to bow the knee to any other Lord or King or Caesar or so on.

Paul himself faced exactly the same kind of challenge. And we see him dealing with it in 2 Timothy 4, verse 6. He knows his end is coming.

[15:15] He knows that he's going to be martyred. He's going to be executed in Rome for his faith. And so how does he view it? Well, he describes it as an offering on the altar, being poured out as a drink offering on the altar.

The drink offering was, in the Old Testament, offered up as a sign of gratitude and a sign of devotion. It's like Paul is saying, with my last act here on earth, well, Lord, I want it to be for you. It's for you. Even though others are taking it away, you know, are ruling over my life, actually, I take control. And actually, I want this to be as an offering for you.

I want my whole of my life to be faithful to you because I know what is coming. And in the same sense that these martyrs here in the passage are under the altar, there's a sense in which they have offered their lives as a living sacrifice.

It's been taken from them, but it's an act of devotion. But they're also under the great sacrifice made for them that keeps them safe ultimately for eternity, that which was the one made through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16:27] They are sheltered, they are saved, and the altar of his great sacrifice. But their death is unjust. Their lives are not taken by God, but those who play in God, reigning over their life and death.

And so they rightly call out on the Lord, verse 10, how long will you take before you deal with this injustice that is yours to avenge?

How long will those in their positions of privilege and power go unpunished for the things that they have perpetrated? And of course, we'll find out the answer to that question later on.

But it's interesting here what the response is. The response is not to focus on what is coming for them, but actually what has been given to those whose lives have been sacrificed at the hands of unjust men.

They're given white robes. And the white robes symbolized purity and righteousness, but also victory. They have remained faithful. They have overcome. And now they will dwell forever on the victor's side.

[17:40] But as they're told that, and as they're given these things, they're told to wait. Wait, why? Well, positively, as it's said in other parts of scripture, to wait for the full number of the redeemed, the elect of God, to be gathered in.

But that same sentiment is actually, it's mentioned here negatively. Wait for the full number of those who in the period, in that same period will be martyred. And why is it put in that way?

Well, I guess it echoes, again, the words and the teaching of Jesus that in this world we'll have trouble. But also, chapter 15, verse 20 of John's gospel, if they persecuted me, they will persecute you.

Matthew 24, 9, where Jesus warns them that people will hate you and kill you because of my name. The teaching is putting an element of realism that yes, there may be, as we name the name, we know the joy of the Lord, but that also may bring hardship.

And those hardship might be, you know, issues at work or whatever, but for naming the name. Those hardships may mean, you know, we're limited in our career choices because we're naming the name.

[18:54] That we may get hassle from family or from work colleagues because we name the name. It's just very realistic about, actually, there will be trouble, there may be hardship that you have to face.

And for some around the world. And actually, there were more Christian martyrs in the last century than there have been in all the centuries before. There is a reality that people may even take your life for naming the name.

And God wants to speak into that and say, there is a great hope for you. That even though you've been dealt unjustly, actually, I have something wonderful for you that great, that outweighs all of that and will seem like nothing in comparison.

You will be with me. You will be washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. And you will dwell safe with me forevermore that later on.

But again, I think there's a realism here. Now, we may not be facing the persecution that they're facing in other parts of the world. But actually, I think we need to be ready for hardship.

[20:02] For naming the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. For seeking to remain faithful for not compromising in terms of morally or in terms of our beliefs, in terms of remaining faithful and standing firm.

The Christian life is the cross before the crime, I think is what's being taught here. It's been interesting just in terms of our own culture.

There's a lot of chat at the moment about the quiet revival that I think actually is very visible. Those born between 1997 and 2002, 12 are called Gen Z.

And there seems to be a move of God amongst that age group, not exclusively, amongst other age groups as well, but amongst that age group in particular, especially amongst men. They're turning up in churches, having said, look, I've been reading the Bible.

I'd like to find out more about the God that it speaks about and about following Jesus Christ. And many of them have no church background at all. There's also concurrently happening, I think, in Western culture, a bit of a swing back to a more Judeo-Christian worldview.

[21:14] And when I say Judeo-Christian worldview, I mean that separate from Christianity. Judeo-Christian worldview just means a return to kind of generally Bible morals, not necessarily to biblical faith.

But there's a swing in general culture back to sort of Judeo-Christian worldviews and we see the kind of the latest ruling in the high court about men and women being determined by their biology as a bit of an indication of that.

And just speaking on that, I think as believers, we need to be wary of attaching ourselves to kind of political movements that are also jumping on the back of that.

We need to be defined by the gospel and make sure that what we're believing is gospel-driven.

Because a lot of the kind of stuff that I think has a tendency to jump on the back of that is moral but not necessarily Christ-centered.

And so there are always kind of tensions for us as believers. We want to be gospel-centered and Christ-centered. And whilst things might sort of attach generally to what we believe, if Christ is not at the core of it, then we need to be a little bit wary.

[22:26] But with all of that kind of happening, this general sort of shift in the culture, there's an interest in folks sort of looking back at the Christian faith again. There's a sort of return to generally Judeo-Christian worldview in some quarters.

There's been some sort of observation about what then is happening. How is that going to look in our culture moving forward? The well-known historian, recent convert to Christianity, Tom Holland, in an interview said that there are three discernible things happening at the moment.

There are those who think, well, who think, okay, Christianity got us thus far but we do not need it anymore and so, you know, we will take it on from here and that, you can call that generally a sort of progressive view and we can see that in operation and that is not always friendly towards the Christian faith.

There are others who think, okay, all the values that we prize like human value, human equality, human dignity, these all actually stem from a Christian worldview, from Christianity.

So, let's hold on to the values but actually we can get rid of the Christianity. You could describe that as the kind of the anti-woke agenda that's risen in sort of as a pendulum swimming away from the former.

[23:42] But then there's a third stream which is this quiet revival that's going on where the church regains confidence to retell the greatest story which I think we're beginning to see.

But I think those three things will run in tandem in the future. And so, yes, we might be seeing growth in some areas in society but also I think we'll still see some hostility towards Christianity and the Christian faith running concurrently for different reasons.

And so, as we look to grow, as we gain confidence, don't be surprised if there's still flack and there's still hardship for it. You know, according to the Bible Society and care research, 49% are interested in having a spiritual conversation.

But that means 51% aren't. And so, the two things are running in tandem. So, I hope that we gain a little bit of confidence as not only as a local church but as the church in the West, we mustn't be surprised if there's also flack concurrently going on.

And I think it's no coincidence that we're going to hear about growth in the church but we're also hearing about hardship in these two chapters. The two things are linked.

[25:06] You know, for our 10th anniversary year, which is coming up, it would be great to give folks the opportunity in the city, in the area, to explore the Christian faith. If indeed, and I think there is, this spiritual interest for folks wanting a spiritual conversation nearly half the population, if there is an interest amongst younger folks, then we should give folks the opportunity to say, hey, maybe you've been thinking about these things.

We'd love to talk to you about it and so please come along to this, come along to church and just put it out there in our city. And I think I have lots of optimism about that.

But I think these chapters give us a little bit of realism and say, well actually, whilst that might create intrigue amongst some, it may create ire amongst others. And we just need to be ready and realistic about that.

I think that's what these chapters are helping us with. Then of course, there is the sixth seal and the great and terrible day of the Lord. And this echoes verses in Isaiah 34, 4, Joel 2, verse 31.

And in the day of final judgment that we're seeing in verse 16, everything is laid low before the Lord, the mountains and so on. There's no hiding place for anyone. All is laid bare before the Lord.

[26:26] On that day, all the wrath that has to this point been sort of delayed in anticipation of this day of reckoning will be unleashed and all the injustices, all the wrongs, all the sins of men and women and nations will be revealed and will be justly dealt with.

But notice the question at the end of the chapter, verse 17. Who will be able to stand on that day? Who will be able to withstand the terrible day that the wrath of the Lamb? And that kind of leads to the final point.

Who will be able to stand? And Paul in the book of Romans is really clear about who will be able to stand. No one. No one. No one is righteous.

No, not one. He says in Romans 3.10. For Romans 3.23, all have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God. In Romans 6.23, the wages of our sin will is death, is judgment.

And so, Paul makes it really clear, no one, not because of your religious background or whatever, no one will be able to stand tall on that day. All that is except those who are able to claim one thing.

[27:45] And that one thing is how we know that you are on the way to becoming a Christian or that you are a Christian if you're holding to it. And what is that one thing? Well, I guess it comes in answer to questions like this.

Imagine there's someone at the gates of heaven and they're asking everyone who's coming wants to get in, why should God let you into heaven? You'll hear all sorts of answers.

It could be, well, you know, I live a good life. I do lots of good things. I try to be moral. I go to church from time to time. I read my Bible. I went to a Christian school.

I have very Christian relatives. because I do, you know, help with charities on the streets because I give to charity. And so, with all of that going, you know, I hope that I've done enough for God to let me in, to earn my way in.

And it may surprise you, if you're new to all of this, that even though all of those are good things, none of these things gain us entry into heaven according to Jesus.

[28 : 49] They are not the things that will enable us to stand on the day of judgment, the day of wrath, and not the things that will give us, therefore, entry into heaven, but actually put us in danger of hell.

Jesus is really clear. The answer to the question, why should he let you into heaven, is this. He shouldn't.

He shouldn't. Because of the lives that we've lived, because of the ways that we've just dishonored the Lord and so on. Again, if you're new to this, thinking, well, I thought I came to church for a little bit of hope and a little bit of help in these things.

Well, actually, the hope is coming. But how do we know that none of these things, how can we know for sure that none of these things will give us entry into heaven?

Well, again, Jesus was really clear because somebody asked him that very question. What must we do? What are the good works that are required, the Lord, to get into heaven? And Jesus said this.

[29 : 53] He said, there's only one work that is required. Only one. One work that is required. And what is it?

We said, it's to believe on the one that was sent. In other words, to put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, understanding the reasons that he came, that he came to die on the cross for your sin, to take the punishment that you deserve on the day of wrath so that you could receive the blessing that you don't deserve on the day of wrath and enter into heaven.

In other words, Jesus substituted himself for you to take the punishment that you deserve to give you the blessing that you don't. And so the only thing that is required, according to Jesus, to gain his entry into heaven, to be able to stand on that day, is to trust in him.

And that is all that we require. If you're new to it, you think, is that it? Do I not have to do some great feats of faith and acts of good kindness and so on?

No, that is it. That is the one thing that Jesus says will gain you enter into heaven. But then, of course, as we put our trust in Jesus, our lives are changed. And the things that we do change, it's not that these things that we begin to do get us into enter into heaven, but we're just living in more accord with heaven's values as our lives are being changed by the power of God as we walk on.

[31 : 19] These passages are telling us that nothing but the blood of the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world, will gain us into heaven. And so no wonder the songs of the redeemed in chapter 7 are all about that, are all about that salvation, verse 10, belongs to our God.

He is the one who has purchased it for us and gives it to us when we ask him for it. Salvation belongs to our God. And in the question and answer in verses 13 and 14, who are those in the robes?

They are the ones who have been washed clean by what? Their good works? Even their great sacrifice? No. By the blood of the Lamb. The blood has atoned for their sins. And the blood so that is at the heart of what is going on here.

Their worship of the Lamb because of what he has done. The great sacrifice that he made for him that they might be able to stand on that day. But what else is going on here? Well, again, we're remembering that this has been written to give encouragement to first century believers facing trial and tribulation.

So it's kind of setting the scene and saying, don't be surprised by these things. There's also encouragement for every believer since. And we need to remember that these visions, these pictures are conveying massive truths.

[32 : 48] And so this, in the midst of it all, we see that chapter 7, verse 1, there's this great calm that happens. Why is this calm happening as things are being held back?

What purpose is this for? Well, we see that it's so that the children of God may be sealed. kind of like in the Exodus story when the blood of the Lamb was painted in the doorposts of the people of God's houses or lintels or doorposts.

And so that the angel of death would pass over their house and spare them from the final plague or judgment. So too, the seal is given here, the divine stamp and authority that this one is mine.

The judgment will pass over them. They are set for life and eternity with me. Again, you see this idea of seal in other scriptures.

Paul talks about it in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 13 and 14. You may be familiar with these verses, great verses for assurance. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are

God's possession to the praise of his glory and grace.

[34:10] So this seal, the giving of the Holy Spirit is a deposit and notice that word guaranteeing our inheritance until the day of Christ Jesus. As believers, we can have and should have great assurance that we will be able to stand on that day not because of what we have done but because of what he has done.

And because he has sealed us for that day that we might be able to stand. So here in the midst of the persecution that's being talked about previously, God is still bringing in his own.

But what about all these numbers? What about the 144,000? The Jehovah's Witnesses say a great deal on this. It's a number who's going to dwell on the earth and they'll all be Jehovah's Witnesses. They have no assurance as they come knocking on your door that it will be them.

But they're knocking on the door, they're writing during COVID and so on in order to do enough good works to try and make sure that it is them totally misunderstanding the scriptures which is a huge tragedy. But I think as you look into it and you see the numerology going on, you see glimpses that actually he's trying to convey something very special here.

So for example, when you look at the tribes, you see that this is all symbolic. Judah, for example, is named first though he's not the firstborn. Dan is missing. Joseph is mentioned though he's not usually mentioned, usually his two sons rather than Joseph.

[35:40] So this is symbolic, this is trying to represent something else. The number is not sevens but 12s here to demonstrate the completeness of the people of God. There are 12 tribes in the Old Testament, 12 disciples in the New.

And as you look at the numbers, there are thousands of them. There's thousands of them. And the way that it's sort of marked out, you may be sort of a familiar sort of setting of the way these numbers are set out.

For example, in Numbers where the tribes of Judah are numbered, the number of those who are fighting men and so on. So the numbers convey a vastness and an exactness, don't they?

144,000, and it's thousands upon thousands upon thousands of these 12s. It's a vastness, it's an exact number. And again, the kind of number moves on.

So the number is what John hears but then actually what he sees is something different. So he's hearing something that is in a sense symbolic. What he's seeing is the reality and what he sees in verse 9 is this great number that is unnumberable, innumerable, uncountable from every tribe, every people, every nation.

[37:00] It is a vast number and actually we can't number but it's an exact number. It's the number that God had always intended would be there. An innumerable number all lining up in worship to the Lamb.

the one who alone has made them worthy to be able to stand on that day and their voices and their words reflect that.

But notice these final verses and he said these are those who in answer to the question who are the ones in white robes have come out of the great tribulation.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 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.

That is our future but also it's a great comfort to those who have lost loved ones in these persecutions through having being martyred and put to death for the faith.

[38:02] This is where they are. This is now their experience and it will be your experience and they will never again hunger. They will never again thirst. The sun will not beat down on them nor any scorching heat 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. And so he's saying to them no more no more of what you've previously faced the hardships you endured for the name.

You're safe now. You're here now. You're home now. Forever. And at that and the opening is the opening of the seventh seal in chapter 8 verse 1 where there's silence and Phil here is going to unpack that for us next week so you can look forward to him explaining that and the trumpets.

But for this morning let's just look at those last verses verse 17 Emily beautifully mentioned them in her prayer. For the Lamb at the center of the throne is the well he will shepherd them.

He will be like the shepherd in Psalm 23 he will lead them to springs of living water and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

[39 : 25] See the tenderness of our shepherd king. See the love that he has for us. See the one in whom we put our trust.

So as you come this morning and in every church in every land there are folks who are just having the road is rough right now.

Maybe the road is smooth for you praise the Lord but for a number of you it is rough. Your souls are grieving. There are plenty of reason for tears for worry maybe for even if it's holding you back from being faithful but know the one who is the great lover of your soul this lamb who is shepherd who wants to lead you to living water ultimately but to that experience in him now to green pastures where he wants to restore your soul he wants to give you hope and help in the in your experience right now.

Hear him saying this morning come just draw a bit closer to me tuck in behind me and let me lead you by still waters and the green pastures.

Let me pray. Thank you.

[41 : 25] yet you encourage us to keep looking up and to know that you are on the throne that you are the sovereign Lord and your purposes are being worked out. We thank you that you reveal to us that you are a lion you are also a lamb though you are strong and mighty also you are tender you are the one who tenderly shepherds us and I pray Lord that as we go out into the week we would keep looking to your shepherdly care we would hear your voice speaking to us the words that we need to hear that lead us to those places that our souls are restored as we face some of the hardships that we are facing that are not short term but are long term and you want to give us hope you want to give us help so Lord we pray that you would help us to lean into you this week our good shepherds the great lover of our souls and that we would be able to as a fellowship gather around one another and spur each other on help each other in practical ways love each other well through these challenges all as tokens of your great love and help to us for we ask it in Jesus precious name

Amen well the those in heaven were singing salvation belongs to our God they were acknowledging that it is God who has purchased our salvation for us and so all praise and glory and honour belongs to him so as we close let's join with that chorus of heaven and sing these words also