

***“Saints of God”***

Today is another one of those days where I had to determine which reading to go with. Was it the Gospel – where Jesus was praying the ‘Beatitudes’? Was it the New Testament lesson from Ephesians that Paul is indeed talking about the saints, or was it the Book of Revelation? Revelation won, and it does win! We know the ending - and praise God – He gives us the victory in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Today’s reading from the Book of Revelation, chapter 7, I think should be of great importance to all of us, and to our worship. There is one word that is the main focus throughout that entire chapter; a word that must be the center of our attention. That word is God. When we see and speak the Word of God it is not only the Father of whom we speak, but Jesus the Lamb upon the throne, and the Holy Spirit as well.

If you turn with me in your Pew Bibles to page 1920, where I want to highlight the richness of the text and the Names of God;

- let’s look at verse 2: *“Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God.”* We are shown about the *“seal of the living God”*
- verse 3: *“Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”* These are not slaves – these are servants; people who willingly want to be there for God.
- Let’s move ahead to verse 10: *“And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”* Wow, salvation belongs to our God – it is the gift that He gives us, besides grace, He gives us the freedom to walk with our heads held high – that every sin that has been given to Him has been wiped clean! How many of us remember “Etch-a-Sketch”? You can do some neat stuff on an “Etch-a-Sketch” and then when you are done – you can shake it and it is all gone. That is what happens when we ask for God’s forgiveness; our “Etch-a-Sketch” is shaken and cleansed. Salvation belongs to our God! You see, I am older than that - I can remember there used to be something called a “Magic Slate” made of cardboard, with a plastic sheet and a little red pen. You could draw some thing or draw a face and when you lifted the film it went away. It was one of those ‘high tech things’ that we used in radio to tell the news person behind the glass what the temperature was. You would put the temperature and a smiley face so they could say “and currently the temperature is 69 degrees on Long Island!” That is the same thing; God says “sin? What sin?” when we have given it to Him, because He is our salvation – we don’t carry that burden any more. The enemy likes to remind us about it, but remember who wins in the end. The promise that God gives us.
- Let’s look at verse 11: *“All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.”*

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- Verse 12: “saying: *“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”* We know that God was, is and shall be forever and ever!
- Verse 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 spread his tent over them.”* How blessed; how absolutely blessed!
- We will finish with verse 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.”* God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. It is crystal clear to me that the Holy Spirit desires pour focus to be solely on God and not on the events to be foretold.

Chapter 7 by the way, is meant to be a break from the terrible judgment of the previous chapter in Jesus’ Revelation to John, and it is meant to teach us about the character of Almighty God, revealing to us important truths about our God. I pray that He will meet each of us and that we may all worship Him freely, in truth today. First, we need to set the record straight. In spite of some of the very popular secular academic and atheistic thought – God is alive! He is doing quite well by the way, the evidence is overwhelming. The Psalmist tells us these words from Psalm 90:2 *“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”*

- God was alive before the beginning;
- He was alive in the beginning when He spoke the earth into existence, and clothed it with all of nature’s splendor.
- He was the living God when Emperor Domitian had the beloved Apostle John poisoned, and when that didn’t work – he exiled him to the Island of Patmos.
- God was still alive when Domitian’s own dead body returned to the dust of the earth.
- God was alive when Thomas Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence and helped give birth to what was THEN a Christian nation.
- He was alive and well when the April 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Time Magazine when Thomas Altizer, and other ‘so called’ theologians proclaimed that God was dead! Do you remember seeing that cover of Time Magazine – it was red with black letters? “God is Dead!”

He is the Living God today – and He will still be the Living God long after His last critic has disappeared from the face of the earth, and their memory is lost forever as ‘dust in the wind.’ Men die but God doesn’t. He never had a beginning and He most certainly does not depend on anyone or anything for His existence. He always has been and always will be – the eternal, self-existing, living God.

In the Book of Revelation, a book filled with terrible judgments, the love of God still shines through. We see the salvation of multitudes; they are numberless; a great multitude that no one could count; too many for any human to count – but God knows the number. This multitude is made up of all nationalities, representing every nation, every ethnic group and every language upon the earth. The great harvest of souls from the Great Tribulation; their

robes have been washed white by the Blood of the Lamb. These saints of God fall under His protection and His provision, and so they sing with the angels of God's glory and majesty. That my friends, is the love of God.

Imagine that after centuries of pleading with mankind to simply come to Him, to believe in Him and to glorify Him – and having been rejected and scorned while humanity lived as they pleased, multiplying their sins, but in the last terrible days on the earth the Gospel invitation still goes out to whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord . That is the love of God! And the love of God that takes these individuals and places them before the throne of God – day and night – feeding them, satisfying them, and tenderly wiping the tears from their eyes. That is the love of God! They come to God during the very worst period of human history, saved from the very jaws of death, while teetering on the very brink of hell. That is the love of God.

My friends, God is Lord, He is supreme. It is God who sits on the throne, and He sits there because He is in control! Throughout all of Holy Scripture – God is never seen pacing the floor. He is never seen at a bargaining table trying to negotiate a solution for some worldly problems; instead He is always seen seated as a figure of peace – with everything completely in control. God – His holy heaven isn't coming apart at the seams; His kingdom isn't unraveling before our very eyes; His economy is sound. My brothers and sisters in Christ – God sits upon the throne – because He is in charge. His throne speaks about His right to rule – no matter what the world might tell you about our own abilities – our knowledge and our strength – we do not have the power to give God authority over our lives – God already has it! Whether we give it to Him or not! We do need to accept and submit to His authority – for each one of us is going to answer to that authority eventually.

God was not elected to His office – and He cannot be voted out! He is the Supreme Court, the legislature, the Chief Executive, all in One. God is in charge, and it is at His pleasure that we serve Him. And that is why during this election I urge us to vote but I urge us to pray before voting. I gave you a sheet with both the candidates for Senate and for President – not trying to urge you how to vote, but giving you the issues in front of you. Please pray! Many have already voted - pray that your vote counts, whatever that vote might be. Remember, God is in charge and ask Him for His will.

I want you to hear these words from Psalm 115:1-3 *“Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. Why do the nations say, “Where is their God?” Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.”* I would like to also share with you these words of God from the Prophet Isaiah: *“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.”* (Isaiah 46:9-10) God is the Supreme, Sovereign Being, His purposes cannot be frustrated. That my friends, is what is meant for God to be God; He is Lord.

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Our principal aim in life ought to be to make Him God in our lives. He is distinguished for His superiority. Moses gave us these words from Deuteronomy, and by the way, they are on the doorposts of every Jewish household in that little canister called a mezuzah, that they touch as they leave and enter their home. It should also be on our hearts! Deuteronomy 6:4 and this should be recognizable; it is called the 'Shema' and Shema means 'hear.' "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" A lot of people will say 'oh, ok – God is one Being – three Persons.' That is true but this is telling us something else "*Hear, O Israel: (and that means all of us) The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" He is telling us the position that He needs to be in our lives – NUMBER ONE – above anybody and anything.

In our lesson today, and our worship – God is celebrated for His superiority, His glory, His wisdom, His honor, He is worthy of our deepest reverence and praise, His power and His might; He is Almighty and He has no equal! Nobody even comes close – please don't ever doubt that. Just look at the blazing sun and the billions of shining stars and remember that God made them all. Look at the tiniest atom, which when split unleashed awesome power – and remember that God made that as well. The Prophet Malachi 3:6 – the Lord proclaimed "*I the LORD do not change.*" In Revelation, chapter 7 we continue to see a God who will not change; He is and always will be!

A loving God, abundant in mercy, rich in grace, ready to forgive, willing to save, - He is and always will be Lord. God promises to all of us saints, and as believers, as those who seek to worship Him, His countenance and eternal life with Him – as the elder proclaimed "*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 spread his tent over them.*" We read that just a little while ago in Revelation 7:15.

In closing, His Temple, His Church, His place of worship, His tabernacle (or tent) will be spread over us – making us family that cannot be undone. How absolutely humbling and awe inspiring to receive His covering or protection and eternal provision. So let me ask you – will we continue to clutter our lives with lesser things, or will we diligently seek after Him to worship Him, to praise Him? Will we continue to be awed by the insignificant or will we make room in our lives to be awed by the might and majesty of God?

He was, and always will be Lord!