

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	71		Gary L.W. Johnson
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THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH (Part II)

Charles Simeon (1759-1836) was one of the great Anglican preachers who made a lasting impression on another great preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who highly recommended Simeon's writing, especially his *Expository Outlines On The Whole Bible* (Twenty-One Volumes). Commenting on our text, Simeon wrote: "In the book of the Revelations of St. John there is more spoken of heaven than in all the inspired volume besides. But so greatly are the circumstances diversified, that, though the subject be ever so often brought under our review, it will always be found to wear a different aspect, and to afford fresh matter for profitable consideration. Indeed so important are those different circumstances that we should suffer a great loss if we did not successively fix our attention upon them as they arise. The passage before us might afford us a just occasion for entering into the subject at large; because we behold here the worship both of the saints and angels; but we prefer noticing some particulars which distinguish this individual passage; and for that purpose shall set before you under one head the worship of heaven, and then the instruction to be derived from it."¹

- I. **THE CENTRAL THEME IN HEAVEN: WORSHIP.** Wilbur Smith, in his helpful book on Heaven, notes: "Much of this worship will be conducted within the framework of music. The book of Revelation contains more songs than any other book in the Bible, with the exception, of course, of the Psalter – fourteen of them, all sung by groups appearing in heaven, some by the angels, some by the elders, but a number of them by the redeemed. In addition to the two songs of the passage we have just quoted, one should include those recorded in Revelation 7:10; 11:16-18; 15:2-4."²

- II. **PRAISE.** "The revelation of God's designs for the future," observes Van Gemeren, "is also for the purpose of praise. We may join together with Moses, Isaiah, the Psalms, Paul, and John in the Apocalypse in singing praise to the infinite wisdom and love of the Lord, by whose counsel all things were made and will be subjugated to Christ's lordship. Through the prophets the Lord is giving his people a beatific vision of the glory prepared for them, of the kingdom of God in Christ, of the new world characterized by righteousness, justice, and holiness. Isaiah's song is representative as he leads the godly to join with him in the praise of God, the King and Divine Warrior, by whose triumph the godly are fully delivered and who condescends in his holiness to dwell among his redeemed:

Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.
Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.
(Isa. 12:5-6; see also Zeph. 3:14-17)

Paul rejoices that in Christ the victory is being secured, and that through Christ the church participates in the spoils of victory (Eph. 4:7). In Christian praise the new work of God in the Messiah becomes prominent, as Jesus is the agent divinely appointed to bring in the new era (Phil. 2:6-11). According to Paul, the Christian must learn to respond to the work of God in Christ not only in acts, prayers, and a development of the glorious hope but also in singing. Singing represents one expression of godliness by which the whole community can encourage one another with the acts of God in the past, present, and future, employing the inspired psalms and hymns of Scripture as well as *spiritual songs* composed by later believers, reflective of the greatness of God in Christ (Eph. 5:19-20). The apostle John adds further insight into the wonderful designs of God in Christ by including the praise of the saints, elders, and angelic host around the throne of Christ in heaven. These expressions of praise, hope, and triumph inspire the saints on earth with hope as well as heartfelt joy as they anticipate the victory of Christ over the kingdoms of this world, the establishment of his rule, and the full, uninhibited joy of the saints (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:15-17; 15:3-4; 19:1-2, 6-8).”³

III. ***THE GLORIFIED SAINTS.*** There is a great throng of saints gathered around the throne clothed in white robes. Scroggie points out that the word white occurs 19 times in the book of Revelation, “and here, as everywhere when used symbolically, it represents *purity*. The hair of the Son of Man is white. The seven angels are clothed in white. The 24 elders are in white raiment. He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment. The robes of the saints have been made white in the blood of the Lamb. The Great Throne of judgment is white.”⁴

IV. ***WHITE ROBES WASHED IN BLOOD.*** “The most significant thing to notice about the washed robes is that they are washed by the ones who wear them. This is striking because we might have expected the elder to say that their robes were washed by the Lamb – that is, that their sins had been forgiven because of the blood Jesus shed on their behalf. Instead, the image is one of *active involvement*. The multitudes robed in white deliberately aligned themselves with the Lamb who was slaughtered. They chose to be linked with him by dipping their clothes in his blood. What does this mean? Simply that they have identified themselves with him completely. They stand for what he stands for. They continue his message in the world. And because of that, they share his experience of the world, even to the point where they *follow the Lamb wherever he goes* (14:4).”⁵ Note carefully the import of what the Lamb has accomplished. He did not merely make redemption possible. “His death did more than this. It actually redeemed a people unto God. It did not merely secure an offer of deliverance; it secured the deliverance itself, and this offer as merely one of the means by which it is actually effected. *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God. That* is no mere **offer** of deliverance. The price has been paid; the prisoners, therefore, must be released and given over to Him. The curse cannot hold them, for He has already borne it; the law cannot hold them, for He has already satisfied it; death and hell cannot hold them, for these derived their claim from that violated law, and that claim is for ever cancelled. Having paid the price of their redemption in His own life’s blood, they are His property: and since He cannot be deprived of His blood-bought right, sin, that by nature reigns in them, must be dethroned and destroyed, and the world, that holds them captive, conquered. The almighty influences of the Holy Spirit, by which alone this can be done, must be sent forth to subdue their hearts to Himself, and to put them in actual and complete possession of that spiritual and eternal life purchased for them.”⁶

CONCLUSION: Ramsey long ago declared that the picture of Christ set forth in the book of Revelation displays an overwhelming mass of evidence for the deity of Christ. “It is as the slain Lamb,

as He who had suffered on the cross; it is in His character of Atoner and constituted Mediator, that He is here advanced to the supreme government of the universe. It is as the Lamb that He is adored by all the redeemed church, by all the angelic throngs, and by a whole worshipping creation; and that with precisely the same homage, the same ascription of universal sovereignty, which they offer to Him that sitteth on the throne. As we hear their songs, and with them behold His ability to look into the secret counsels of God, and to execute those counsels in unfolding the mighty scheme of Providence and Redemption, let us joyfully unite in their homage, prostrating ourselves before His throne in hearty consecration to His service, and hailing Him as our Lord and our God. Yes, believer, that Saviour who died for you is the mighty God, and is able to keep your immortal soul, and even your mortal body, safe in life, in death, and through eternity. That heart of His is full of human sympathies, but they are the sympathies of a God, and not powerless, like the tears of a mere man. Where Jesus weeps, death itself lets go its grasp, and Lazarus comes forth. He loves you with all the tenderness, and gentleness, and warm affection of His human heart, but with all the force of that divinity to which it belongs. Trust Him implicitly, love Him fervently, live for Him entirely, as redeemed unto God by His blood.”⁷

ENDNOTES

¹ Charles Simeon, *Expository Outlines On The Whole Bible XXI* (rpt. Zondervan, 1956), p. 153.

² Wilbur Smith, *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven* (Moody Press, 1968), p. 191.

³ W. Van Gemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation From Creation To The New Jerusalem* (Zondervan, 1988), p. 471.

⁴ W. G. Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption III* (Revell, 1970), p. 379.

⁵ P. Spilsbury, *The Throne, The Lamb & The Dragon* (IVP, 2002), p. 76.

⁶ J. B. Ramsey, *Revelation: An Exposition of The First Eleven Chapters* (Banner of Truth, 1977), p. 202.

⁷ J. B. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 309.