

From Tribulation to Triumph: Saints Washed in the Lamb's Blood

If we look up at a night sky ablaze with stars, each one a distant light piercing the darkness, it can make us think of the countless believers that have shone before us. On this All Saints Sunday, we honor those faithful ones who've gone ahead—the saints triumphant, now resting in God's eternal light. Yet, their story intertwines with ours, drawing us into the mystery of heaven's throne room as described in Revelation 7:13-17.

"Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?' I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones coming 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. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

This vision isn't a far-off fairy tale; it's a heartfelt promise that stirs our souls, especially today as we remember our loved ones who've joined that white-robed multitude. Picture your grandmother who prayed through hard times, or a faithful friend lost too soon—they're part of this throng, voices raised in endless praise. It pulls at your heart, inviting you to wonder: What does this mean for us still walking earth's shadowed paths?

But as we linger on this glorious scene, a deep tension arises, like a storm brewing over a peaceful meadow, threatening to uproot everything. These saints in white haven't strolled into heaven on easy streets; they've come "out

of the great tribulation." The Greek word "thlipsis" captures this as crushing pressure, like being ground between massive stones, where suffering squeezes the life from you. It's not fleeting trouble—it's profound, soul-testing hardship. Think of the early Christians during the Roman persecutions under Emperor Nero in the first century, when believers were blamed for fires and executed in cruel spectacles, their faith tried in flames. Or recall the faithful during the Great Depression in the 1930s, when economic collapse left families hungry and hopeless, yet many clung to God amid the crush.

This unresolved ache hits close: Why must saints endure such pain? If even the faithful face death, loss, and persecution—like the 300-some million faithful today persecuted by other religions and oppressive governments—does it mean God's protection fails? On All Saints Sunday, we feel this keenly as we mourn those who've suffered and passed on. The tension lingers, unresolved, like tears that won't dry, making us question if triumph is possible in a world where tribulation seems to win.

Yet, in that very moment, the main truth breaks through like morning light scattering the shadows, warming our chilled hearts. These saints aren't victorious by their own grit; "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The Lamb is Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior, whose shed blood cleanses us completely. In Greek, "arnion" for Lamb suggests a gentle, sacrificial young sheep, pointing to Christ's humble death on the cross that conquers sin and death. This is grace alone—God's gift, not our earning. Because of Jesus, "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." No more hunger, thirst, or burning heat—these recall Israel's desert trials, but now eternally resolved. "The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd," leading to "springs of living water," and "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." For All Saints Sunday, this truth shines: The saints we honor today are there not by merit, but by Christ's

blood, redeemed from tribulation into endless joy. It's the gospel's core, transforming mourners into heirs of heaven.

Now, how does this truth weave into the fabric of real life? It's not lofty theory; it's comfort for our daily aches. Consider the biblical account of the prophet Elijah, fleeing in despair to a cave after facing royal persecution, yet God whispered renewal, sustaining him through the storm. In church history, think of the reformer Jan Hus in the early 1400s, burned at the stake for his faith, but his witness sparked a movement that outlived the flames and led to the Reformation of the church. This truth applies when we grieve a sainted parent lost to illness, or face our own trials like job insecurity in tough economies. Christ's blood washes us clean, making us part of the saintly multitude even now. In archaeology, the discovery of ancient catacombs in Rome, where early Christians buried their dead with symbols of hope, shows how faith endured underground pressures. Today, when a community rallies after a natural disaster, like floods devastating homes and hurricanes ravaging huge swaths of land, believers find God's shelter not in avoiding pain, but in His presence that binds wounds. For All Saints Sunday, this means our departed loved ones are safely shepherded, urging us to live as saints militant—forgiven, serving God amid life's crush.

This application kindles deep inspiration for daily living, like a gentle flame igniting hope in a darkened room. Knowing we're robed in Christ's righteousness frees us to face each day with quiet strength, hearts lifted by the saints' example. It's akin to Roald Amundsen and his team on their expedition to the South Pole in 1911, braving Antarctic blizzards and near-starvation, yet pressing forward sustained by careful planning and the promise of historic achievement. On All Saints Sunday, we draw from the triumphant saints' legacy: They endured by grace, so we can too—sharing kindness with a struggling neighbor, holding fast in prayer during uncertainty, or finding joy

in worship despite sorrow. The Lamb shepherds us to living waters, refreshing parched spirits, while God's tear-wiping promise assures no grief lasts forever.

This touches the heart profoundly, turning ordinary moments into sacred ones, where we live as connected to heaven's choir, inspired to persevere with love and faith. As we conclude, let's recap: We've been drawn into Revelation's saintly vision on this All Saints Sunday, wrestled with tribulation's heavy tension, and embraced the truth of robes whitened by the Lamb's blood. This redeems our real pains, inspiring lives of hopeful endurance. What wondrous spiritual work Jesus accomplishes! He purifies us through His sacrifice, shelters us in God's throne room, shepherds us to eternal refreshment, and wipes away every tear, uniting us with the saints in triumphant peace. Step into this grace today—trust His cleansing blood, serve with the saints, and let His guidance light your path. Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in Him.

Pastor Ron Breight

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