

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and
strength and honor and glory and praise!

Revelation 5:11-12

Heaven's Worship

with Pastor Steve

Worship and Tribulation

In Revelation 7 we are introduced to a great multitude of people standing before the throne of God and the Lamb. In verse nine we learn that this multitude was dressed in white robes and had palm branches in their right hands. Who are these people? Where did they come from?

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? And I said to him, 'Sir, you know. So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:13-14

The elder told John that these people had come out of the great tribulation. Many theologians agree that before the final return of Christ there will be a tribulation period. Down through the ages they have disagreed and argued over whether or not the church would endure this tribulation. Some believe in a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Others believe in a post-tribulation rapture while still others believe in a mid-tribulation rapture.

Since I am not a theologian I want fully enter the debate here. However, one thing stands out to me; this great multitude came out of the great tribulation. Maybe I have missed something here, but it would seem that to come out of something you would have to first be in it. I can't come out of the bathroom if I wasn't first in the bathroom. One thing is for sure Jesus promised us in John 16:33, *In this world you will have tribulation...* Everyone who follows after Christ will have tribulation. There is no "great escape."

The Greek word used for tribulation in this Revelation passage means pressure, affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, and trouble. Using this definition can we say that Jesus suffered tribulation during his earthly ministry? Of course he did. His question to us is, *Is a servant better than his master?* If Jesus suffered tribulation so will we if we are his disciples. Paul and Barnabas preached to the converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch that through many tribulations they would enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). If the early church converts suffered tribulation should we be exempt?

In 1987 I started a small green plant business which had a meager beginning but grew to a substantial income in a few short years. The majority of my business came from a military base located in the city where I lived. My family had just settled in to our new lifestyle when the government made a decision to close the military base.

As hard as I tried I could not make up the loss of income and finally sold what was left of my business in 1994. Our income dropped by over fifty percent the next year. Times were tough. We cut expenses as much as we possibly could and even incurred some debt, but one thing we didn't do was stop worshiping. During the times when we thought our strength would fail we turned on a worship tape and ministered to the Lord. We set aside a time each week with our kids to listen to the bible read on cassette. I spent many hours alone playing my guitar before the Lord and singing prayers of worship and petition.

I don't mean to sound like a spiritual hero. To be honest with you I didn't know what else to do. I had no control over my circumstances. There was no one to turn to who could fix my problem. In his infinite wisdom God allowed the brook to dry up. He didn't owe me the luxury of being financially secure. All I

had come from him. There was only one proper response; worship. Regardless of my circumstances he was worthy of my worship.

The great multitude may have come out of tribulation, but as saints of God you can bet the farm that they had gone through tribulation. Their response in the presence of God was worship. No doubt they had learned to worship during times of pressure and affliction.

During his time of tribulation Habakkuk prayed the following:

Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls — Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

There is much more to Habakkuk's prayer than meets the eye. A quick look at the Hebrew words used in this acclamation reveals that this was no ordinary worship service. The word used for rejoice in verse eighteen is *guwl*. *Guwl* means to spin around (under the influence of any violent emotion). *Alaz* is the Hebrew word translated joy. It means to jump for joy. Regardless of the conditions around him, Habakkuk made a choice to radically worship God. He worshiped with song, music and dance realizing that the Lord was his strength.

Worship your way through tribulation. In your darkest hour; worship. Wave those palm branches, sing and dance before the Lord. Worship moves the heart of God, and he comforts us in our tribulation (2 Corinthians 1:4). Worship elevates you into God's presence. It puts your focus on the one who controls the circumstances. When you are in his presence you can see your circumstances from his point of view. Though the circumstances may not change you will change in your circumstances. You are changed as you focus on him.

Jesus promised that in this world we will have tribulation, but that is not all he said in John 16:33. The rest of the verse reads, . . . *But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. We have a savior. We have a champion. Join with the host of heaven saying, Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*(Revelation 7:12)