Rev. 7:14 These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

I have to tell you that this is one of my absolute favorite sections of Scripture. It is a section that describes for us in wonderful language the wonder and marvel of what heaven will be like for every believer in Jesus. But before we talk about how you get there, let’s just highlight for ourselves what it is that we will be a part of.

You did notice that our text is a part of a grand revelation that is showing us the wonder and marvel of God’s kingdom in heaven. There is a great multitude before the throne of God, but not just the throne of God, please note that the multitude is standing before the very Lamb of God, yes, that risen and victorious Lamb of God who is the heart and core of the Christian faith. And notice the joyous shout of praise that they give. They say, **“Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne and from the Lamb.”**

I want you to keep that statement in mind, this beautiful confession of the wonder and marvel of God. For right now, I point out this shout and the subsequent action because what this does is direct our attention to the source, the heart and the cause of salvation and then it goes on and in total submission, with absolute humbleness and awe the entire assembly of heaven: angels, elders, four living creatures, everyone says, **“Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever. Amen.”** I think we would all agree that this is a powerful and pointed testimony to the greatness of the Lord our God.

Immediately following those wonderful outbursts of praise and glory to God we then get a chance to focus just briefly on the multitude before this throne of God. The first thing that is highlighted is just who this multitude in white robes is, but immediately following that disclosure we learn about the benefits that this multitude in white robes has. For right now let me just highlight this awesome picture of just what heaven will be like for those in the white robes.

Our text says this: **“Because of this they are in front of the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon them, nor will 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.”**

Seriously, did you catch the total wonder and joy of those words? How could we know this picture of eternal life with Jesus and not be filled with rejoicing and wonder at the home of souls called home to Jesus? We are reminded in 1 Thessalonians of what this greatness of heaven does for us in these words: **“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you do not grieve in the same way as the others, who have no hope.”** Because of the victory of Jesus we have this sure and certain guarantee of the wonder, purity, joy and absolute holy perfection of God’s kingdom of eternal life.

Our loved ones who proceeded us in death are with God in heaven. You and I have this very same promise of eternal joy for ourselves too. Seriously, what is the down side of this picture? These souls are in heaven, always with God, always protected, sheltered and serving God. There is in this eternal kingdom nothing that can harm or hurt, nothing that will hinder or impede total joy and perfect holy harmony with God. Nothing! In other words, there just isn’t a down side to God’s promise of eternal life and salvation in Jesus. Honestly, in view of this wonderful revelation of God I personally think that one of the greatest gifts we have in Jesus is that God does call us out of this vale of tears to be with him forever and ever. Yes, a Christian death is the long awaited and eternal victory of our souls.

So when a Christian is called home to this wonder of God, what a joy that we know exactly where they are and what they are doing. They are before the throne of God giving him praise and glory and serving and being served in total wonder. Call it simple if you would, but right there is my grasp of how you handle the death of a loved one. You just realize their ultimate joy in Jesus and rejoice in that.

Of course, I think the problem with many people is that they don’t know how to become a part of this great multitude in white robes. Oh, they have some ideas, but often those ideas are skewed. Skewed because the faith they have is more about this world than the world to come. And yet, remember what Jesus said to Pilate as he was facing his death: **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** So let’s explore closely the awesome truth of salvation as we consider: **THOSE IN WHITE ROBES.**

You do realize it is one of the elders who speaks to John and asks him about the identity of the white robed members. I grasp the wisdom of John is simply saying, **“Sir, you know.”** This elder did know and what he shares is of utter importance to our grasp of how this salvation thing works. He gives this wonderful but very deep statement: **“These are they who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”**

What is clear is that we are indeed talking about people, perhaps you could say “souls”, but I prefer to speak of people, you know, human being composed of body and soul that are found in our world. These people have been delivered from our world. In this case, our world is called **“the great tribulation”** a phrase I find compatible with what Psalm 23 calls our world, namely, **“the valley of the shadow of death.”** In other words the great multitude are those who have been saved.

Please note a few other things. First, I like that our EHV translation keeps the proper verb tenses. The people “are coming.” It is a present tense and indicates continued action, even to the point that I can well imagine that as John was looking at this group there were always more and more people walking up to join in what was going on. The next thing to notice is the fact that we are told **“they are coming out of.”** I think those words important. This is not some special event these souls are coming from, not some imagined war where we have to help God defend his kingdom or some sort of extra bad persecution these souls must endure to qualify for white robes. Every person here has come from the great tribulation. Every person here has had to endure the great tribulation, for we are clearly told they are coming out of it.

How should we define the phrase “great tribulation?” I would tell you it is none other than this world of ours, devastated by sin and languishing under the corruption that sin has brought. In Romans 8 this corruption is spoken of in this way: **“For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that even creation itself will be set free from the slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.”** The world we live in is the great tribulation where Satan can attack and tempt and work very hard in order to get you to deny and turn away from the wonder of Jesus. It is a hard world, a world filled with sorrow, pain, deception, and a myriad of other evils as the result of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. It is for that reason that we are told not to love the world or anything in the world. The world and its things will always perish, spoil and fade.

What we are told here is that we can be and will be, maybe in light of the resurrection of Jesus, I should say, we are going to be delivered from this world, this great tribulation into God’s eternal wonder of heaven. How? That’s where our second statement comes in.

You and I get to be people dressed in white robes in front of the throne and Lamb of God because we have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. I want you to understand what an awesome thing has just be said to us. For that matter this picture actually broke out in a discussion at our Monday night bible class. As we were discussing what Jesus has done for us, this picture of the people dressed in white and washed in the blood of the Lamb was spoken of. One of the members of the class wanted to know why God spoke that way, after all, blood, real blood does not cleanse and make white. Blood stains and is really quite gruesome.

My answer was simple. God speaks this way to direct our attention to the cross of Christ. On that cross Jesus shed his blood, gave his very life for each and every sinner of the world. It is because of that blood that we are considered holy, pure and faultless before God. The blood of Jesus brings us the robe of Christ’s righteousness and because of that robe of righteousness we are accounted before God as without sin. I believe God speaks this way because we always need to be directed back to the cross of Jesus and just what happened there. On that cross Jesus died. Jesus gave his life, shed his blood. That was the payment that God’s perfect justice demanded for the sins of the world. Now, if God didn’t care about sin, if God didn’t count sin against us, if God was just love and only love, and will forgive no matter what….then why the cross? Why did Jesus have to die? Why was his blood shed?

It is because of sin. Sin is in the world. God sent his son to atone for sin. That this is true is seen just in the fact that this atonement was foreshadowed in the ceremonial laws. The suffering and dying of God’s Son for our sins was clearly presented as the very plan of God. Sin had to be atoned for and that is why Jesus had to die. He died to pay for sin. If you decide that sin is nothing…if you decide that you can pick and choose what is and what isn’t sin, or if you decide that you can keep your sin, revel in it and that God will just have to accept that…then you miss the whole point of washing in the blood of the Lamb. Only in and through Jesus suffering and death, only because Jesus died and rose can you and I ever be accounted as holy and forgiven by God.

This is what is being spoken of in this vision. The people in white robes are there because of Jesus and what Jesus has done. Jesus suffered and died on the cross for sin! Jesus rose from the dead to declare that He is God and Lord and that all things are in his hands. You cannot get to heaven, you cannot approach heaven, you cannot even hope for heaven without the blood of Jesus covering your sins.

Because that blood brings forgiveness. That blood gets us through the valley of the shadow of death. That blood of Jesus provides the strength, wisdom and perseverance to endure the great tribulation. Romans 5 says to us: **“We also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. And hope will not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”**  Hebrews 12 says to us: **“Let us run with patient endurance the race that is laid out for us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal.”** Or just look at how James 1 gives the very same lesson: **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you fall into various kinds of trials, because you know that the testing of our faith produces patient endurance. And let patient endurance finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”**

That blood of Jesus delivers us. It is what we cling to and hope in. Our faith is not about the things of this world: social justice, income equality, toleration and other such things. Those things are the political battles of this world. Jesus is not about this world. He is about getting us through this world, getting us cleansed, purified and declared heirs and children of God. Those things don’t happen because of us, they happen because Jesus has delivered. Jesus has won the victory and with that victory from sin and death, He has given the gift of eternal life. Yes, we will one day join that group of white ones, join them because Jesus covers our sins and forgives our iniquities. Know this truth of Jesus.

By the way, that verse of praise I told you to remember? Listen to it again and ask just how much of a role mankind plays in bringing about eternal life and salvation. That line said, **“Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne and from the Lamb.”** Yes, salvation is about the plan of God to save by the blood of his Son. Thank you Jesus. Amen.