

Sermon Sunday 14th April 2013

John 10 22 -30 and Revelations 7 9 – 17

Just occasionally there is one verse from a Bible Reading which strikes me as soon as I read or hear it. Verse 10 from Revelations 7 is just such a verse.

‘And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God,

Who sits upon the throne,

And to the Lamb.’

It encapsulates for me what we must do as Christians by seeking salvation from God through Jesus Christ His Son. First though a little explanation or clarification about the Book of Revelations. Revelation was written by John in his last years in exile on the island of Patmos and it is believed it was written for the seven churches in Asia and all believers everywhere who collectively were being persecuted for their faith. It records a series of visions or revelations starting with that of a glorified Christ in Heaven and the ultimate triumph when God will overcome evil.

It uses symbolic imagery to show hope - in the ultimate triumph of God over evil – to the Christians being persecuted. This type of writing is known in Jewish literature as ‘apocalyptic.’ Apocalypse is a genre much used by writers and film makers today to demonstrate the end of time. So when you read Revelations you will see how apocalyptic it really is; God overcoming evil and the end of time as we know it – in other words the second coming. I’d recommend you read and

study Revelation, it contains so much imagery and revelations of Heaven and eternity. I have found it very revealing about how I must believe and live as a Christian in order to try and attain eternal life and to use Keiths own words here when he looked at the draft – accept me warts and all!

So what is verse 10 about? It is showing the multitude of Christians in Heaven praising God and His Son, referred to here as ‘the lamb’ as one. It shows you and me that there is only one true way to salvation with God because ‘Salvation belongs to our God’ and that way can only come I believe by following Jesus and His teachings. On that way we must continuously acknowledge our sins, our misgivings’ our doubts, our failings, our pride and our anger and seek forgiveness from God and at the same time live as Jesus commands us to live. By this way and this way alone can we achieve true salvation. The way we must follow is unique to each of us because each of us as a Christian is unique in Gods eyes and we each have our own way to follow as laid down by God.

This is how salvation is achieved; it cannot be achieved by performing good acts, by giving money to charity or even showing kindness to another person. Salvation requires a continuing, personal, life changing sacrifice and commitment to Jesus’ teachings in our everyday lives. Now, this commitment is very demanding and impossible to achieve in my opinion all the time. God takes us as we are and while we strive to live a true Christian life we must always be aware that we can fail; it’s then that we must turn to God again say sorry and ask for help. By this continuous process we accept Jesus Christ into our lives and Gods life changing ways and look forward to salvation; I told you reading Revelations made me think about how I must believe and live as a Christian! Revelations is a book full of

wonderful imagery and a glimpse of eternity in heaven with God and the heavenly hosts. I don't know how John felt when he was shown the images he wrote about but from the way he wrote about what he saw in clear precise terms shows I think that it deeply affected him. The heavenly hosts and worship are something we should image in our worship; prayer, praise and holiness in our worship.

This may be unsettling or even upsetting and if you want to discuss and pray about this or anything else troubling you there will be a prayer team at the back of Church after the Service who will do this with you or of course you can talk to me.

Verse 14 refers to the white robes being made white in the blood of the lamb; an impossibility you will say and a strange statement at first reading; however the blood of the lamb making the robes white is the blood which Jesus shed for you and me upon the cross and it is this blood which became and still is the world's greatest purifier or cleansing agent. Why because it is the blood of Christ which will remove the guilt of sin from you and me. Jesus died so that our sins will be forgiven and the imagery in Revelations of white robes being made clean with lambs blood is just that; just substitute your life for the white robe and be washed by the blood of Christ who died for you.

So who then is there to help us to receive salvation? Verse 17 **'For the lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water'** is the clue. The lamb is of course Jesus and the reference to lamb fits in with the reading from John where in verse 27 Jesus says **'My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.'** As true Christians we must listen to Jesus and follow Him and live as He has taught us; we are the sheep and he is the

shepherd we must listen to and follow. The reward for doing this life changing act is shown to us in verse 28 'I give them eternal life.'

Jesus then goes on to make a connection with the reading from Revelation where we read about God and the Lamb being together as one and Jesus reveals for the first time who He truly is. In verse 30 he says 'I and the father are one.' It is here for the first time that Jesus tells us He has true divinity; Jesus and His father are not the same person in human terms but are one in essence and nature. He is claiming to be and is God. Many scholars believe that this is the first reference to what we now call the Trinity – One God, One Father and One Holy Spirit – but that's one for Trinity Sunday so watch this lectern!

So from the imagery of Revelation and in the words of Jesus in John 10 we now know how you and I can receive eternal life. You and I will receive eternal life and never perish and join that great multitude praising God in heaven by acknowledging salvation comes from God through Jesus Christ. Amen.