Easter 4/Good Shepherd — Revelation 7:9-17
May 8, 2022 — 375-436-219-766*-727-432
*CW-S – "The Lord's My Shepherd"
**CW-S – "There Is a Higher Throne"

Jesus Is Indeed Our Good Shepherd
I. Because of Him our salvation is sure.
II. Because of Him we can be sure of eternal life in heaven.

Dear Christian friends,

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23 is **probably** one of the MOST FAMILIAR passages in the Bible. God's people have turned to those words **over** and over for comfort and **reassurance**.

That ***"the LORD is my shepherd"*** – that Jesus is our ***"Good Shepherd"*** – is SO COMFORTING. Recall Jesus' words in John 10. ***"I am the Good Shepherd; I lay down My life for the sheep. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand."*** WHAT JOY – what peace – **comfort** – **strength** are in those words!

WE NEED those words – AND we need this vision. **God gave** this vision to His Church ON EARTH – to His people struggling – **suffering** – sighing – **waiting**. This vision shows us that JESUS IS INDEED OUR GOOD SHEPHERD. Because Jesus is our ***"Good Shepherd"*** 1)our salvation is **sure** and 2)we can be sure of **eternal life** in heaven.

I. Because of Jesus our salvation is sure.

"I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing in front of the (God's) throne and of the Lamb." See right here JUST HOW GOOD our Good Shepherd is. ***"The LORD"*** is not just MY Shepherd and **your** Shepherd. The FLOCK of our Good Shepherd is ***"a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language."***

This vision is an encouragement to BE BOLD in **mission work** and **Christian education**. Let's FACE IT – both mission work and Christian education are expensive. It takes generous offerings to **train** future pastors, teachers, missionaries and then to send them out and support them. It **takes generous offerings** to have our Christian grade schools, high schools, etc. We try to win back those who are STRAYING or who have STOPPED coming to church. We talk to those who have never heard their Good Shepherd's **sweet *"voice."*** OFTEN we don't see any **immediate** results. This is now time for confirmation in many churches. We can easily see many who **were confirmed** but have SINCE FALLEN away from their Savior. Is it WORTH the effort – the **struggle** – the **time**? Take another look at this ***"great multitude that no one can count in front of the throne and of the Lamb."*** They are there BECAUSE SOMEONE SHARED God's Word with them.

They are in heaven ***"wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands."*** Wait a minute! Those people **in heaven** were all sinners. EVERY ONE of them deserved to **be damned** to hell. **In that crowd** are former idolaters, **thieves**, murderers, adulterers, drunks, drug addicts, **greedy, selfish** people, gossips, liars, **complainers**, bratty children, etc. EVERY ONE of them should be in hell – AND THEY KNOW it! Yet here they are **in heaven**!

They want all to know WHY they're in heaven. ***"Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb."*** That THEY are saved – that WE are saved – is not because of **anything** we do or the LIVES we live. We NEED to be saved because we are BY NATURE **sinful** and **unclean**.

We've disobeyed God in things we've DONE and NOT done. We're NOT FIT **to live** in heaven. Sin – guilt – death – hell are COLD, HARD FACTS of life – OUR lives! – **facts** we can't ignore or MAKE GO AWAY.

There is NO WAY we could save ourselves SO GOD TOOK it **upon Himself** to save us! God has made us FIT to **live with Him** in heaven. ***"Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb."*** Our salvation is ALL GOD'S DOING.

These sinners ***"washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*** There's only one thing that can ***"cleanse us from all sin"*** – the shed blood of God's own Son. ONLY in Jesus is there forgiveness of all our sins. **Only in Jesus** and HIS PERFECT LIFE do we have ***"the righteousness that counts before God"*** – the holiness that makes us fit for heaven.

WHAT a ***"GOOD Shepherd"*** Jesus is! Jesus clothes us with His perfect life. Jesus fully paid for **every one** of our sins when He died on the cross. Bearing our sin Jesus ***"laid down His life for the sheep."*** Our ***"Good Shepherd"*** died on the cross as ***"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."*** Then Jesus ***"took up His life again"*** – He rose triumphant from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus conquered death and hell for us. JESUS makes our salvation **sure**.

Satan wants us to FORGET all that. **He wants** us to QUESTION God's **love** – to doubt God's **forgiveness**. Can you really call yourself a **Christian** after the life you lived last week? LAST WEEK - did you always PUT GOD FIRST - did your language and attitude **improve**? Were you more respectful – **obedient** – **honest** – HUMBLE? Did you take time to read your Bible? Were you more thankful and did LESS GRUMBLING? Are your offerings the VERY BEST or WHAT'S LEFTOVER **after taking care** of yourself first? Satan has plenty more questions like those! They hit home, don't they? We aren't ANYWHERE NEAR perfect. There is plenty of room for IMPROVEMENT in our **lives as Christians**. But there is one thing that CAN'T BE IMPROVED – Jesus as our ***"Good Shepherd."*** **With Jesus** as our Good Shepherd our salvation IS SURE because Jesus takes care of **everything** for us. God forgives us – we are SAVED – not because of WHO WE are or what great lives we've lived but because of WHO Jesus is and what He's all done for us.

II. Because of Jesus we can be sure of eternal life in heaven.

There that ***"great multitude"*** stands in heaven ***"in front of (God's) throne and of the Lamb."*** There ONE DAY we too shall stand – stand IN THE VERY PRESENCE of God Himself. **You and me** in the presence of the **eternal, almighty, holy, triune** Creator God! ***"We shall see Him as He is"*** is the promise of Scripture. JUST HOW that can be – or what that will **all be like** – I don't know. But God's promise IS CLEAR. Because Jesus is our ***"Good Shepherd"*** we will ***"see God face to face"*** in heaven.

With WORDS and PICTURES John tries to describe the **perfection** and **glory** of life in heaven. Because we have ***"washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"*** we will be ***"in front of the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. He who sits on the throne will spread His tent over (us)."***

There are some things to note about the JOY of **being in** God's presence. We ***"will serve God day and night"*** – there will be NO INTERRUPTIONS or END to heaven. It will truly be ETERNAL – having **no end**. Eternally and perfectly we will ***"serve"*** God.

I can remember as a child thinking that in heaven we'd FLY around **with our wings** and SING day and night. I also remember thinking that heaven would BE BORING **singing** all the time. **In heaven** our joy will be in ***"serving"*** God. Paul in **Romans 12** talks about our daily lives now as our ***"serving"*** God. **In heaven** ALL WE DO – whatever that may be – will be done PERFECTLY FOR **God's glory** and ACCORDING to **God's will**.

"(We) will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon (us), nor will any scorching heat." With Adam and Eve's fall into sin this ONCE PERFECT world was cursed. DAY IN and day out we are reminded that **ignoring** and **defying** God is SERIOUS BUSINESS and has its consequences. So we have to deal with **pains, problems**, sickness, suffering, death – THE LIST goes on and on. We just take all that AS A PART of life. But it will not be A PART of **eternal life** in heaven. Sin and Satan will tempt us **no more**. Our sinful natures will be **gone for good**. It will indeed be HEAVEN – and IT'S OURS because Jesus is our ***"Good Shepherd."***

"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." You can almost feel John GROPING for the right words to **describe** heaven. God ***"wiping every tear from our eyes."*** There will be no reason for **sorrow** or **tears** in heaven. God will MAKE SURE of that! **Life** will be perfect IN EVERY WAY – and IT'S OURS because Jesus is our ***"Good Shepherd."***

There they are IN HEAVEN. This ***"great multitude"*** came there ***"out of the great tribulation."*** SUCH IS LIFE now. ***"We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God." "In this world you will have trouble,"*** Jesus tells us, but then adds, ***"take heart, I have overcome the world."*** Revelation MAKES SO CLEAR that we are not to expect **any kind** of a heaven here on earth. Life will be rough – UNFAIR, etc. But with Jesus as our ***"Good Shepherd"*** we can confidently look forward to that ***"new heaven and new earth"*** God has promised us.

This vision is one of MY FAVORITES in the Bible. I like to read it and PICK OUT **familiar faces** in that ***"great multitude in front of the throne and of the Lamb."*** Every year there are MORE FACES that I **recognize** and can't wait to see again. This **vision reminds us** that our dead **Christian** loved ones are not in the cemetery. Their dead bodies are there FOR THE TIME BEING but they themselves are **with Jesus** in heaven. Here we see fulfilled Jesus' promise, ***"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."*** And to know that ONE DAY we will join them there because Jesus is ALSO OUR ***"Good Shepherd."*** WOW!

God gave us this vision to comfort and encourage us as WE FACE ***"the great tribulations"*** of our own lives. It's SO EASY for us to see our problems and FOCUS ON what's **bad** and wrong. **With this vision** God reminds us to ***"lift up our heads and rejoice for our redemption draws near."*** With Paul we can say, ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*** And it's all because Jesus is OUR ***"Good Shepherd."***

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