

Read: Revelation 7:9-17

Visions of Victory

Revelation 7:9a

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you were banished to a lonely island, what would you want to have with you? Your answer might reveal something about what you value in life.

John, the disciple of Jesus who wrote our reading today, found himself in that situation. Because he had followed Jesus, he was exiled to a rocky island called Patmos. It was a place where the Roman government sent prisoners, far, far away from their homes and their families. We don't know if John was able to bring any belongings with him. He must have felt so alone on that island. He knew many of his friends had suffered or even been put to death for following Jesus. John was old, perhaps tired. What could comfort him now?

God knew what John needed to find comfort. He allowed John to see visions of heaven—a huge crowd of people who died and were now with Jesus because they had faith in him. Their robes were white because Jesus' blood washed them from every sin. They were enjoying Jesus' victory, free from sin and the troubles of their lives on earth.

The sight of this great crowd celebrating in heaven is exactly what John needed to see. Yes, he had patiently endured a lifetime of being bullied and mistreated. And yes, John had moments of feeling down, lonely, and longing to relive beautiful, past memories of his time with Jesus. That's all John needed on that rocky island—that beautiful picture of heaven helped him see that someday, his patience and endurance would be worthwhile. He and so many others who endured to the end of life for the name of Jesus would celebrate their Savior's victory together in unending life.

But here's the wonderful thing about John: It wasn't enough for him to close his eyes and dream of sweet victory. He got busy on that rocky island and wrote down what he saw so that he might inspire others who often experience feelings like him. God gave him the words, and John wrote them down so that now, you can see and be comforted by his great vision of heaven (Revelation 1:1-3).

When we are lonely, tired, defeated, or feeling down, read these words given to us from God, who wants us to see what Jesus' victory will someday look like in heaven. Strengthened by

these words, we can encourage one another in the faith, wherever we are and with whatever we have, just as John did for us.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Why is a huge crowd of people and angels in heaven praising Jesus right now?
- Do you have to wait until heaven to praise Jesus? *(No!)* Let's do it now: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What is the meaning of "white robes" in John's picture of heaven? How do you get one?
- Describe two parts of John's picture of heaven that bring you peace and comfort.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Describe a time when you felt a little persecuted or lonely because of who you are or what you believe.
- Look up Hebrews 10:24-25. What can you do so you don't feel quite so alone?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you have given us a picture of your victory in heaven to encourage us. Help us to be truly thankful and to share that encouragement with others. Amen.