

Remember Christ's Love

LHC: Message Twenty-Seven (980705PM)

Week 27: Remember Christ's Love

(Revelation 7)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you remember the wondrous love of Jesus!

SUNDAY: The Love of Jesus

*“For **God so loved the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

—John 3:16, emphasis added

Who could ever forget the dramatic scene of Revelation 6? Somewhere beyond the starry sky a herald angel stood with a trumpet in his hand, and at an elected time, by the decree of the Lord God Almighty, the trumpet sounded and the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ! Thus the Tribulation opened, and Christ began taking back the earth, which is rightfully His. One by one Christ will unroll the seals. As each seal is broken, He will gain further possession and control of His inheritance.

Revelation 7 then opens with the love of Jesus sending 144,000 missionaries into this time of Great Tribulation upon the world. This is the most important chapter to help us truly understand the love of Jesus Christ. In no other place in the Bible is it so dramatically etched out as it is in the contrast between the wrath in chapter 6 and the mercy in chapter 7.

Christ's merciful love in Revelation 7 is demonstrated by His sending over four times as many missionaries into the world as are currently serving Him. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are only 35,000 missionaries of every persuasion, but during the Tribulation He will provide 144,000 evangelists!

Look at how Jesus shows His love throughout this overview of Revelation 7:

- **Verses 1–3:** Jesus stands with the servants of the Lamb, and prepares them for the bad times ahead. His Spirit signs, seals, and secures them.
- **Verses 4–8:** Jesus knows where His servants are at all times. He directs His servants, and seals 12,000 members of each of the tribes of Israel.
- **Verses 9–10:** Jesus wants His servants with Him.
- **Verses 11–12, 15:** Jesus seeks His servants' worship.
- **Verses 13–14:** Jesus promises His servants a fruitful ministry.
- **Verse 16:** Jesus comforts His servants after all their troubles on earth.

- **Verse 17:** Jesus refreshes His servants by His presence.

What a beautiful chapter! Like Jesus, do you share His loving passion for lost souls? Do you have a burden for the lost? If you haven't up to this point, would you like to get started? You can begin by making a list of unsaved family members, friends, and neighbors, and then start praying for them. Get a supply of gospel tracts at your local church or Christian bookstore, and ask the Lord to give you divine appointments to share those tracts. Then keep praying, and look expectantly for the Lord's direction. Once you begin giving away tracts and loving lost souls, Christ will grant fruit, and you will share in His joy over each person who turns from darkness to the Light.

My Prayer for You This Week: *Oh Lord, we thank You for the magnificence of Your love! It is so comforting to see Your love as the Lamb who shepherds, sustains, and meets every need and fulfills every desire of Your faithful servants. Thank You that before You unleash the horrors of the Tribulation on earth, that You put evangelists into every corner of this planet to give the good news of the gospel. Thank You for loving the world so much that You gave Your life to pay our sin debt. Even when You are hated, and those who will have nothing to do with You seek to erase Your servants from the face of this earth, You still mercifully send Your messengers. Oh, how we pray that we will see the beauty of what messengers of the Master in the Tribulation look like so that we can emulate them! If that is what You honor and love, that is what we want to be. We want to rejoice in the security and the knowledge of how You care for those whom You send out to minister. Open our eyes to behold more wonderful things about You, Lord Jesus, for it is in Your precious name that we pray. Amen.*

MONDAY: How Jesus Shows His Love

*After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “**Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.**”*

—Revelation 7:1–3, emphasis added

We now meet the evangelists our loving God sends to rescue helpless sinners at earth's darkest hour. In the company of the Lamb are those who rest in the absolutely secure safety of the love of Jesus for His servants. Jesus shows His love as He stands with these slaves of the Lamb. How does He do that? Look at the elements of Christ's love in Revelation 7:1–3. Notice that Jesus calls for the angels to hold back the four winds lest the judgment should blow across the earth. Before the judgment sweeps down upon the earth, and these servants who are residing there, Jesus prepares them for bad times. Have you ever thought about that? Have you ever experienced some great and fruitful times of fellowship with the Lord just before bad times hit?

So many times my wife, Bonnie, and I have talked about the challenging and difficult periods we have gone through in our lives, ministry, and family. During such

talks, we remembered with gratefulness how the Lord has often given special seasons when our fellowship with Him through the Word and prayer was elongated because He was lovingly preparing us for the hardships ahead.

These Jewish evangelists are also being lovingly prepared for what is ahead by being “sealed” with the mark on their foreheads of Christ’s name and the name of His Father. But the term “sealed” is different from anything we know about. In the ancient world, a mark upon a person could stand for at least five different things. **A mark could stand for:**

1. **Ownership:** Often a slave was branded with his owner’s mark, just as sheep and cattle are branded. In this instance, the 144,000 missionaries belong to the Lamb of God.
2. **Loyalty:** A soldier would sometimes brand his hand with the name of the general whom he loved, and would willingly follow him into any battle. In the presence of the Lamb stand the veterans who have proved their loyalty.
3. **Security:** Historically, a wax seal pressed with the imprint of an owner would secure that object as owned and belonging to another. Similarly, God’s seal upon these witnesses, as well as upon us (2 Corinthians 1:21–22), shows God’s ownership—and the great security that brings!
4. **Dependence:** The great Arab chieftains had some humble clients who were absolutely dependent on them. Often, to outwardly identify that dependence, a sheik would brand his clients with the same mark used to brand his camels. In the company of the Lamb are those who are utterly dependent on His love and the grace of God.
5. **Safety:** “It was common for those who were the devotees of a god to be stamped with his sign. Sometimes that worked very cruelly. Plutarch tells us that after the disastrous defeat of the Athenians under Nicias in Sicily, the Sicilians took the captives and branded them on the forehead with a galloping horse, the emblem of Sicily.”¹ So these marked ones in chapter 7 are owned, loyal, secure, dependent, and trusting. They are resting safely in the Lord because they have responded to the love of Jesus. Have you made time to experience Christ’s love as you worship Him today?

TUESDAY: The Sealed of Israel

*And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.***

—Revelation 7:4, emphasis added

In chapter 7, the Lamb’s servants are protected; no harm can come to those who are sealed. Who are these people? They are tribes of Israel, the Jews, not the church or anyone else. Many commentators have tried to show that they are not Jews—especially Reformed scholars who believe that God is through with the Jews forever, and is dealing with the church only. They believe that these special missionaries are either denominations or great triumphant Christians of the past. But what do Judah, Rueben,

Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin have in common? They are all sons of Jacob.

The servants in this passage are born-again Jewish people. Jesus either confronts each of them personally, just like He did the apostle Paul, or perhaps there is a great outpouring of God in Israel at this time. We do not know for sure how they've come to Christ, but we do know from the Scriptures that these 144,000 are all converted.

In Ephesians 1, we see that when believers come to Christ they are: chosen, sealed, spiritually filled, spiritually led, protected, rewarded, servants, and owned. And, as Romans 8:16 says, the Spirit assures us that we are saved: *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*

This is exactly what God does for the 144,000 Jews who become Christians. The Holy Spirit of God seals them, so they likewise get to experience the great Shepherd's betrothal gift to His bride, which is the Holy Spirit—"the earnest" or "*guarantee of our inheritance*": *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee [earnest] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

The thought behind the word "guarantee" (NKJV) or "earnest" (KJV) is exactly the thought behind the idea of an engagement ring or down payment on something. Just as a bride-to-be delights in showing off her engagement ring, so we are to delight in "showing off" the Holy Spirit before the world to signify that our affections have been engaged to another: *"to Him who is raised from the dead"* (Romans 7:4). No longer are we to show any allegiance to the decaying and soon-passing world system. That is why it is spiritual adultery to love the world and all that is in it.

If you are truly engaged to Jesus Christ, this will be evident through special spiritual changes in your life. If you can see no such changes, you would do well to question: *Am I really betrothed to Christ? Is He my beloved?*

WEDNESDAY: The Holy Spirit Signs His Servants

*He who establishes us with you in Christ . . . has **sealed us and given us the Spirit** in our hearts **as a guarantee.***

—2 Corinthians 1:21–22, emphasis added

God not only seals and secures His servants, but Jesus also shows His love by always knowing the whereabouts of His servants that He has signed His name upon (Revelation 7:4–8). There is something comforting about this in verse 4: *One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.*

If you really want to confound a Jew, ask him, "What tribe are you in?" He won't be able to tell you. In A.D. 70, when the Roman General Titus came and burned the temple, genealogical records that were stored there, and zealously guarded, were destroyed. But God knows which tribe each of His people is in, and Jesus always knows where His servants are.

In Revelation 7:5–8, the tribes are not listed in their right birth order. Not all the tribes are there. Dan is missing, Manasseh is the son of Joseph, and Ephraim is not in

this listing. The order according to birth would be: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and so on. However, the list as it appears in chapter 7 is God's order. Judah is shown first because that is the royal tribe. The tribe of Dan is not there because they apostatized, and no apostate can be an evangelist. God has His purposes and He sets things in order as He sees fit. (By the way, this is not the same order listed in Revelation 21 and 22.)

Jesus will identify all the members of these tribes, confront them face-to-face, and draw them to himself. Some people have a problem with His chasing after the 144,000 like this because of feeling that in their own lives they had to search for Christ a long time before getting saved. Such persons simply have a wrong view of salvation. No one personally seeks the Lord: *"There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God"* (Romans 3:10–11). God is the One who always does the chasing to draw us to himself. We were born dead in our trespasses and sins—we were not born looking for Jesus.

We can clearly see in the 144,000 that there are three elements to what the Holy Spirit does in each believer at salvation: (1) the Spirit signs us; (2) the Spirit seals us; and (3) the Spirit secures us. (We will cover all three elements over the next few days.)

First Element of Salvation—The Spirit Signs Us: *He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God* (2 Corinthians 1:21). "Anointed" is the signature of God showing that we have security, and authentically belong to God. Many people in Christendom worry a lot about whether or not they are really saved. Usually this is due to having an incorrect view as to how they became a Christian. They forget *who* does the action and *who* is the initiator of salvation. The Bible says that it is always God.

Remember: we don't find *Christ*, He finds *us*. We are lost, and He is the seeker: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). He first finds us, we respond to Him, and then He establishes us. That means He grabs hold of us and anoints us with His Spirit; He signs us so that we are authentically His.

- His gift of salvation is **gracious**: *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name* (John 1:12).
- His supply is **inexhaustible**: *For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure* (John 3:34).
- His anointing is **personal**: *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things* (1 John 2:20).

It is so wonderful that we don't need a mystical anointing from some teacher. The Holy Spirit signs us so that we are authentically God's. Hallelujah!

THURSDAY: The Holy Spirit Seals His Servants

*After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude** which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, **saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"***

—Revelation 7:9–10, emphasis added

In the verses above Jesus shows His love by wanting His servants with Him. Christ has a global desire to cry out His message. The 144,000 missionaries will go to the entire world and find the greatest response in history to the gospel—a numberless multitude will come to Christ. Because of His merciful love, Jesus wants lost people on earth to be with Him. Think about this: when you and I witness and share the gospel, we are extending Christ’s invitation to people whom He wants to live with Him forever. What a privilege!

Why are the white-robed people there in verse 9? The Beast, the Antichrist, killed them. In fact, the Antichrist and his legions followed them around. Can you imagine being a missionary and having someone with an AK-47 standing behind you, ready to kill the people you lead to salvation? It would be hard to evangelize. Maybe that is why there are not more in the Muslim world coming to Christ because few missionaries are willing to go to them and be killed. But these 144,000 evangelists will boldly go forth to evangelize in spite of Antichrist’s agents spying on them, and in spite of seeing those who come to Christ being martyred. They will be so zealous, and God’s love in Christ will be so powerful, that as all hell is breaking loose on the planet, countless people will be led to Christ. For they will realize that their true citizenship is in heaven, as Scripture tells us in Hebrews 11:13–16.

Second Element of Salvation—The Spirit Seals His Servants: *Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee* (2 Corinthians 1:22a). The ancient world recognized the sealing of goods. People wore signet rings with distinctive markings on them. They would press their signet into soft wax or clay across the opening of a document, tomb, sealed box, and so on; it would bear an exact imprint of that signet ring, which signified that a representation of the owner was going with it.

The Holy Spirit’s sealing of us is the believer’s security of divine ownership. In other words, we have the image of our owner transferred to us. We bear the image of Christ—our precious possession. As we yield to Him, we will look more and more like Him every day because the Holy Spirit will impress the image of Christ on us.

We can’t escape this truth: as we age we will act more like whoever our “god” is. For that reason, it grieves me as a pastor when I see professing Christians who do not look more like Christ every day. Instead, they idolize a current rock star, movie star, or sports figure. Although they may deny it, that person is their “god.” Who you admire is who you want to look like. If you admire the Lord Jesus Christ and belong to Him, as you view Him through the picture window of the Bible, you will want to look more like Him every day.

When the Spirit seals us, it assures us of three things:

1. **We are verified**—the image of the owner’s signet is transferred to us.
2. **We are signified**—by the presence of the owner. If the owner could not be at a transaction in ancient times, his ring signified that he had been there in spirit at least.
3. **We are certified**—the contents are authentic. We really have God’s life and have His image within us!

Who or what do you serve? Is your “god” made in the image of man—or do you serve the authentic Lord God Almighty of the universe? The answer to that question determines your eternal dwelling place.

FRIDAY: The Holy Spirit Secures His Servants

*All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! **Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.**” . . . Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*

—Revelation 7:11–12, 15, emphasis added

Jesus shows His love by seeking His servants’ worship. What a great joy it will be for Him to hear this massive outpouring of a sevenfold doxology! How will Christ be worshiped in verses 11 and 12? They will speak to Him. You can speak praises to God, too, and show other people how to prepare for worship. Look again at what He loves to hear: “Amen! *Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*” If you truly love Christ, tell Him: “Oh God, everything that is important I offer to You—my attention, possessions, and pleasure!”

The Old Testament worshipers used to bring their sacrifices in hands that were lifted up. When we enter the Lord’s house, we should lift up our overflowing hearts of love in worship as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. Jesus longs for us to worship Him through His Word, songs, fasting, and prayer. All this focuses our lives on Him, as He desires.

If you want to enhance your worship experience, I encourage you to arrive early at services; sit down, stop your activity and thoughts, and become still before the Lord. Then open your Bible and get tuned in to the Lord (like you tune in your favorite radio station), for Psalm 46:10 says: *Be still, and know that I am God.* We must purposefully open our hearts and let His Word draw us to Him so we can begin to worship Him as He deserves.

Jesus also shows His love by promising His servants a fruitful ministry (Revelation 7:13–14). This is a promise that has been fulfilled. Jesus discussed the Tribulation in the Gospels. In Matthew 10 He spoke to the Jews in particular, and secondarily to us: “*You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes*” (vv. 22–23).

In Matthew 10:22–23, Christ is also talking about the 144,000 Tribulation evangelists. They are not only evangelizing the world, but Israel also. He predicted to them that they were going to have a fruitful ministry.

Look at Revelation 7:14 again: “*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.*” Jesus promised that His Word would not return void. He promised His servants that if

they would give out the Word there would be fruit in response to Christ. Revelation 7:13–14 represents the greatest outflow of missionary evangelism in the history of the world.

As His servants, we ought to cling to His promise that we will be fruitful. All we have to do is go tell people, but sometimes we are unwilling. Perhaps this is due to busyness, fear, thinking they wouldn't be interested, and so forth. If we let him, Satan will happily flood our minds and hearts with excuses to avoid witnessing. It can happen to anyone. For example, someone I led to the Lord always sits in a certain place in our Sunday morning service. When I look in his direction, I am often reminded of how unwilling I was at first to share the gospel with him because I was so busy. Had I not done so, however, I would have missed the great blessing of seeing that person come to Christ. You and I should never forget that God promises us a fruitful ministry if we will just tell people about Jesus.

Third Element of Salvation—The Spirit Secures His Servants: *The Spirit in our hearts [is] as a guarantee* (2 Corinthians 1:22b). I remember so distinctly when I went to the office where my fiancée worked. In my pocket was a little box containing the engagement ring I had finally earned enough money to buy. I had already asked Bonnie to marry me, but she did not know I had a ring with me. We will never forget that diner where we ate lunch that day. After I gave Bonnie the ring, with every bite of food she ate, she displayed it for all to see.

Because I lived 500 miles away from her, I wanted to put a mark of ownership on Bonnie so that no one else could snatch her up. Spiritually, God gives us His pledge by giving us His Holy Spirit who is our “engagement ring” that displays the security of His protection. And He promises to bring us to the wedding day—taking us home to be married to Christ and live with Him forever. That is the threefold cord of our secure salvation: (1) we are signed with the very name of God; (2) we are sealed with the very seal of God; and (3) we are secured by the very presence of God.

Are you being faithful to the One who is to be your beloved Bridegroom?

SATURDAY: Christ Comforts His Servants

*“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for **the Lamb** who is in the midst of the throne **will shepherd them** and lead them to living fountains of waters. **And God will wipe away every tear** from their eyes.”*

— Revelation 7:16–17, emphasis added

Jesus shows His love by comforting His servants after all their troubles. In the Great Tribulation, they will be hungry and thirsty, and the sun will scorch them. But in the midst of their suffering, the Spirit of God will draw them, and the Tribulation evangelists will then point them to the Messiah. After Jesus Christ saves them, they will be killed by the Antichrist. What will Jesus do then? He will comfort them. There is nothing like the comforting love of someone who truly cares for us!

Jesus also shows His love by refreshing His servants with His presence. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them by leading them to living fountains of waters. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Can you see all the

elements of His loving provision? He is with them, shepherding them, and refreshing them!

The Comforting Voice of Jesus: It is just like our Lord to speak to us when we need Him the most. His tender “*Fear not!*” can calm the storms in our hearts regardless of the circumstances around us. (Emphasis added in the verses below.)

- **Abraham heard His comforting voice:** *The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “**Do not be afraid**, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (Genesis 15:1).*
- **Isaac heard His comforting voice:** *The LORD appeared to him . . . and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; **do not fear**, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake” (Genesis 26:24).*
- **Jacob heard His comforting voice:** *So He said, “I am God, the God of your father; **do not fear** to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there” (Genesis 46:3).*
- **King Jehoshaphat heard His comforting voice:** *“**Do not be afraid** nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. . . . Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD . . . ! **Do not fear** or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you’ ” (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17b).*
- **Daniel heard His comforting voice:** *“**Do not fear**, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.” . . . And he said, “O man greatly beloved, **fear not!** Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!” (Daniel 10:12, 19).*
- **Mary heard His comforting voice:** *The angel said to her, “**Do not be afraid**, Mary, for you have found favor with God” (Luke 1:30).*
- **Peter heard His comforting voice:** *Jesus said to Simon, “**Do not be afraid**. From now on you will catch men” (Luke 5:10b).*
- **Paul heard His comforting voice:** *Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “**Do not be afraid**, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9–10).*

Because the Lord prepares His people for troubles, we can see the love of Jesus in all these verses. And you, too, can likewise experience the comfort of God’s Son. The next time you feel alone and defeated, meditate on how the Lord ministered to these saints.

Make a choice to live in hope: What are God’s servants like? They find hope for living in the fact that the loving Christ:

- Wants us to worship Him.
- Wants to refresh us with His presence.

- Wants us to be still before Him.
- Wants us to trust that He knows where we are all the time.
- Wants to prepare us for bad times.
- Wants to comfort us in all our troubles.
- Wants to give us a fruitful ministry.
- Wants us to be with Him for all eternity!

These are all marks of Christ's love. We are His servants, and though we are not Jewish evangelists going through the Tribulation, every one of these elements is what God wants to give us today. He wants us to rejoice that we are signed and sealed and that He is going to safely deliver us home through death, or the glorious Rapture.

Oh, how I pray that you also long to worship this lovely Christ! One way to do that is by meditating upon the words of this beautiful old song:

Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me

*Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
O bind my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there:
Thine wholly, Thine alone, I am;
Be Thou alone my constant flame.*

*O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone;
O may Thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown:
All coldness from my heart remove;
May ev'ry act, word, thought, be love.*

*O Love, how gracious is Thy way!
All fear before Thy presence flies;
Care, anguish, sorrow melt away,
Where e'er Thy healing beams arise:
O Jesus, nothing may I see,
Nothing desire, or seek, but Thee.*

—Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676)

tr. John Wesley (1703–1791)

¹ William Barclay, *The Revelation of John: Chapters 6–22* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 117.