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The Grand Rehearsiment

Text: Revelation 7:9-17

Two numbers: 144,000 (7:4); an innumerable multitude of people (9). One scholar (A. M. Farrer. *The Revelation of St*. *John* *the Divine*. p 110) says this contrast gives expression to two complementary themes of scripture.

1. God knows finite numbers (hairs on our heads, the elect). The Jehovah’s Witness teach that only 144,000 will be sealed and resurrected to heavenly life, using Revelation 7:4 and 14:1, 3 as their proof texts. This finite number, 144,000, is surely symbolic. Twelve is squared, then multiplied by one thousand. Robert Mounce says that’s a twofold way of emphasizing completeness (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 168)
2. God is not bound to finite numbers (the promise of Abraham’s innumerable descendants- Gen. 15:5)

Two realities worth celebrating, strike me from this passage.

* Diversity is a kingdom value

Nations

Tribes

Peoples

Tongues

* Worship is a kingdom engagement

This innumerable host is standing before the throne.

Saying(singing) “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (10)

The angels worship also (11-12)

A question is raised by one of the elders. “Who are these?” This is a common format when a vision is explained (Zechariah 4:3–5).

John answers with, “You know” (better than I).

The elder identifies the multitude:

These are they who have:

* Come out of tribulation (perhaps this the tribulation alluded to in 2:22 and 3:10 [and in John 16:33 and Acts 14:22] AND the Great Tribulation period, the great distress that will be experienced just before the second coming of Christ, written of in Matthew 24-25 and Revelation 16:18)
* Washed their robes- symbolizing purity
* Palm branches in their hands- symbolizing victory

Now, all these *do* is worship (15)

The closing verses of our text describe these in terms of what they *don’t* have and what they *do* have. You and I are also *don't* and *do* people.

1. They have *no* hunger

2. They have *no* thirst

3. They have *no* sunburn or heat stroke

A. They *do* *have* a shepherd

B. They *do* *have* refreshment (living waters)

C. They *do* *have* a Comforter (God, who wipes tears away)

You know that in my preaching I honor the English language. I am careful about what I say and how I say it. I don't slaughter words. I don’t usually make up words.

I read a list, recently, called “24 Brilliant New Words that Must be Added to a Dictionary”, I share with you, six of the twenty-four.

* Dudevorce- when two bros officially end their friendship
* Nonversation- completely worthless conversation
* Internest- cocoon of blankets and pillow that you gather around yourself while surfing the Internet
* Chairdrobe- piling clothes on a chair in place of a closet or dresser (see also, floordrobe)
* Destinesia- when you get to where you're intending to go, but forget why you were going there in the first place
* Textpectation- anticipation felt when waiting for a response to a text

For this sermon, I have coined a word. **Rehearsiment**.

What we are engaged in here, at Crossroads is:

1. A grand **experiment** of social interaction- approximately 160 people come together every week and learn from each other. We learn languages, traditions, customs, and culinary distinctions. We are not an all white or all black or all brown congregation. We are not all American or all European or all African or all Caribbean Islands congregation. We are engaged in a grand cultural and racial worship/ life-in-community **experiment**. What does it look like when people are NOT committed to such a grand experiment?
2. While we do what we do here, in Stone Mountain, Georgia, on the earth, we are also **rehearsing** for that great day, when in heaven we shall worship with people from all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues.

We are, here at Crossroads, both **rehearsing** and **experimenting**. Hence, my coined word: **rehearsiment**.

As we engaged in this rehearsiment, we will see transformation- in ourselves and in our church. Transformation is that exciting process through which God makes us into something else.

Just as these in our text were changed, so shall *we* be. Look at the Lamb that becomes a shepherd (17). Look at the sacrificed one that sits on the throne; the Lamb that becomes a king (15).

As this rehearsiment continues, you and I will find ourselves becoming the people we have longed to be.

Hallelujah!!!!

Amen