

ONE BODY; MANY PARTS, REV.7:

series

◆ “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 in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” All the angels were standing round the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 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 spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre 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.”” Revelation 7:9-17, NIV.

◆ **Intro:** Cadul’s heart pounded as he approached the Pig People. He recalled the hatred he once had for them, how he had hunted them. He recalled how the Wayhi had once slaughtered the Pig People. Pretending to come in peace, and grabbing the Pig People’s own weapons from their hands, they killed them. Only a few had escaped to tell of it. Cadul, and most of the once brutal Ayores of Paraguay, were now followers of a man named Jesus Christ. And they knew they had to tell the Pig People about him, about this new love that had changed their insides. So the day after Christmas, 1986 they set out because as they put it, “When we were in

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the bush, we were in great darkness, and had no one to tell us of God's love. No one."

◆ Today our church celebrates what we call "All Nations Heritage Week."

We celebrate the universal nature of the Body of Christ which we call the Church.

◆ **1. The presence of All Nations in God's family assures me that God's kingdom is on the move. He keeps his promises!**

◆ See, the Biblical picture of "all nations" illustrates God's faithful pursuit of sinful people. He isn't a waiting God, and hoping God, or a wondering God. No, he is a God who set out from home intent on reaching the ends of the earth. It shows that God keeps his promises

◆ **A.** There is a major parallel to our text in Isaiah 25:1-8. We better take a quick look at it. (read). Notice some parallels with our text in Revelation: Everything Isaiah prophesied, John saw in his vision of heaven. Look.

◆ "Therefore strong peoples will honour you; cities of ruthless nations will revere you." Isaiah 25:3, NIV.

◆ *"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. Revelation 7:9, NIV.*

◆ "You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. Isaiah 25:4 NIV.

◆ *"The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat." Revelation 7:16, NIV.*

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- ◆ “On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet ...” Isaiah 25:6, NIV.
 - ◆ “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.”
Revelation 7:16a, NIV
- ◆ “On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;” Isaiah 25:7
 - ◆ *“he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.”*
Revelation 7:15, NIV.
- ◆ “he will swallow up death for ever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.” Isaiah 25:8, NIV.
 - ◆ “For the Lamb at the centre 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.” Revelation 7:17, NIV.
- ◆ I point this out to help us see that it is historically characteristic of God to be searching, calling, rescuing people from every earth sector. He is ever faithful to his purpose. Even his choice of Israel was for this broader purpose.
 - ◆ *“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,”* Isaiah 42:6, NIV.
- ◆ In the context (3b-4) we discover that it is God’s faithfulness that causes this to happen. Listen to another such passage:

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- ◆ “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” This is what the LORD says--the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel--to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: “Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” Isaiah 49:6-9, NIV.
- ◆ What do you hear in that text? He’s talking to people who might be beginning to think that the God they serve is smaller than they thought. He’s talking to people who are feeling a bit desolate, like maybe God really isn’t paying much attention to their struggling, progress-less, ho-hum, below-average, government-manipulated lives! And he’s saying, “Whoa. Not only am I going to rescue my servant people. I’m going beyond that. I’m going to rescue people in places that haven’t even wondered if I gave up on them yet, because they don’t even *know* me yet.”
- ◆ **B.** Have you picked up on it so far? The presence of people in God’s family from the corners of the earth, people of different color and shape –the presence of this phenomena, namely that all members of heaven are not American, caucasian, or even resemble you and me, - this is our clue that God is keeping his promises.
 - ◆ 1) Many of us often sit on the ends of our beds and despair over the state of the world. Sex is everywhere: on TV, on the internet, in the mall. What chance do our kids have to find the joy of a lifelong,

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dedicated mate? Christians are called intolerant, even though they *don't* pronounce death to all *Muslims* or exterminate their villages! News stations herald our Supreme Courts lack of action to defend the sanctity of marriage as between an man and woman, and applaud rouge judges who throw out voter established marriage amendments to their state constitutions!

◆ It's easy to wonder if God has a plan that is coming true. Everything we try not to do, because we've read it in our devotional time, is being done, said, and talked about on our block. *It makes you wish for heaven.* Oil prices rise and fall on winds we can't control. There always seems to be a new drug teens can huff, or shoot, or snort. It's easy to wonder...

◆ 2) The Christians of John's day wondered too... Domitian's reign of terror began around 95AD continuing Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians. This is right about the time the Gospel were being written! They were fed to wild beasts to entertain the crowd. They were used as human torches to light the Emperor's garden parties.

◆ In a world where people tend to stick to their own kind, or to sneak up on other's unlike them and spear them –sometimes with sharp sticks, sometimes with sharp words– castigate them, or belittle other people for so little as being a different color... in a world like this when the Family of God displays the harmonious presence of “all nations” it is a glimpse of heaven already taking form on earth. Christ is still in charge of the universe, and he is giving it the shape of things to come!

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- ◆ Furthermore, when you and I welcome into our lives people of vastly different backgrounds, looks, cultures, and languages, we are bringing the Kingdom of Heaven into the present. We are demonstrating that Christianity is a universal faith. That the Kingdom of God is universal. That God is operative in every place, that boundaries and obstacles we were sure would never change *are dismantled* by the power of the Savior God, Jesus.
- ◆ **2. The presence of All Nations in God's family assures me that God not only keeps his promises, but that his promises win!** It illustrates the Triumph of God.
- ◆ **A.** A quick skim of the Isaiah reveals that the "nations" are always an addition to Israel. For example:
 - ◆ Isa.25 told us God would destroy the sheet covering all people *and* remove the disgrace of his people.
 - ◆ Isa.42:6 told us God's servant would be a covenant to his people *and* a light to the gentiles.
 - ◆ Isa.49:6 said that God would restore the tribes of Jacob *and also* make them bring salvation to the ends of the earth.
 - ◆ Isa.52:9 promised that God would redeem Jerusalem *and lay bare* his holy arm in the sight of "all nations".
- ◆ So John's vision of heaven represents the culmination of what God has been doing all through human history: It is the opposite of the fall where people walked away from God. It is the reversal of how God's family seemed to narrow instead of expand for so long.

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- ◆1) Evil multiplied at the Tower of Babel and God curbed it by separating people into different tongues.
- ◆2) Sin flooded the world in Noah's day, and God curbed it by keeping only one family alive.
- ◆3) Of the great patriarchs whose descendants were supposed to be "as numerable as the stars" only one repeatedly survived: Isaac, Jacob, Judah's line, David's family, the promised Messiah himself.
- ◆So the presence of "all nations" is a billboard shouting "Reversal is begun. God is turning the ship! We know how this sad story ends! And it's really well!" Now, Jesus has begun a family that would go to the ends of the earth.
 - ◆The Holy Spirit conquered the "Babel-ing" at Pentacost where the disciples were given the gift of foreign tongues, and all nations could hear the good news regardless of their language.
- ◆Do you notice the "reversing" images in Revelation 7?
 - ◆v14 tells us "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Red that whitens? It's reminiscent of Ps. 51:7 "cleanse me with hyssop...wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Hyssop was a branch the Israelites dipped in a bowl of the sacrificial red blood and then shook off onto the altar, and even the people in church. How can getting red blood on you make you white and clean?
 - ◆It's what Isaiah 1:18 talks about. "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white

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as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Isaiah 1:18, NIV.

- ◆ In a sacrifice something died, it’s blood drained away, and the sinner goes free. When Jesus Christ died for sin, he bleached every believer whiter than our longest attempt at scrubbing, cleaner than any detergent. But once again, the people cleansed are people of “every nation, people, and language” (v9)
- ◆ *So “all nations”, the different shaped eyes of the worshipers, the hispanic accent, the black skin standing next to red-haired, pale-skinned, Irishman, –it’s all a picture of the triumph of God. God wins, not just for the Jews. Not just for descendants of Abraham. No, no, folks. God wins across the board! In the cities of Egypt, in the deserts of Afganistan, in the hills of Kentucky, and on the islands of the Philippines! All the politicians in Washington are destined to bow before Jesus. This is the story of the earth.*
- ◆ When the church reflects the diversity of the world, joined in fellowship, it is a beacon of the hope of the Kingdom. The gears may turn slowly in time, but they are turning nonetheless.
- ◆ **Conclusion:**
 - ◆ Cadul and seven other Wayhi now faced the warriors of the Pig People without weapons. Porai was there. His father had escaped Wayhi’s massacre and told all the rest of the Pig People all about it. As the once violent Ayores laid down a gift, the Pig People warriors surrounded them, plunging a spear into the back of one, clubbing and spearing others. Cadul pulled a spear from his own cheek and from

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the hands of the attacker. He could have killed him right then. But he retreated with Dejabi who dropped his Bible because his arm was broken in four places, and his shoulder had been speared.

◆ See, said Cadul, “Now I have a weapon, but I didn’t use it. We came in peace.” The Pig People watched in amazement as he threw it aside. The battle was over. 25 Pig natives came out of the darkness that day at the cost of 5 of the 8 Ayores lives. They became family with the Ayores. Chicor, who had killed Pajei, even became the husband to his widow and a father to their three children.

◆ Such is the Long Arm of the Lord. Another group joined the army robed in white standing before the throne. When we sing a spanish song, or you greet a fellow with a way different nose than yours, listen carefully. Maybe you will hear the shouts of triumph, the thunder of an innumerable crowd saying “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!””
Revelation 7:12, NIV.

“πορευθεντες ουν μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη
βαπτιζοντες αυτους εις το ονομα του πατρος και του
υιου και του αγιου πνευματος διδασκοντες αυτους
τηρειν παντα οσα ενετειλαμην υμιν και ιδου εγω μεθ
υμων ειμι πασας τας ημερας εως της συντελειας του
αιωνος” Matthew 28:19, 20, WH.