



# Sermon Growth Guide

**June 20, 2021**

## **Future Jesus - Jesus Gathers Nations**

### **Revelation 7:9-17**

**Key Verse:** Revelation 7:9 “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. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”

**Big Idea:** Jesus gathers His bride from every nation, tribe, people.

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## **Foundations**

Happy Father’s Day! Take time today and this week to thank God for the way He models Kingdom fatherhood to you and those around you. Remember and celebrate the fathers in your life for the ways in which they help point to the father heart of God. Pray that God will bless all fathers of the world to live as He desires fathers to live.

This week in Revelation 7 we see how the grace of God in Christ has gathered people (a countless number of people!) from every nation, tribe, people and language. Together, this people, the bride of Christ, offers unified, unending worship to Jesus declaring that “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb,” (verse 10).

In Christ, diversity and unity meet in Kingdom peace. Regarding diversity, all nations are gathered. The Word of salvation in Christ must and will go out into all the earth. Regarding unity, we will all of us, with palm branches and white robes, point together to Christ alone as our one and only salvation.

Pray that God will guide and guard your Life Group through this passage today. Pray that First Pres will even more continue to pursue the never-ending day of worship depicted in Revelation 7. Pray that we will be even more conformed to the image of Christ through our time together this week.

## **Understanding God’s Word**

Describe again the scene of worship Pastor Tim walks us through this week in verses 9 and 10.

What is the eternal heart cry of the angels, elders, and four living creatures in verse 12?

What promises are found in verses 15-17?

## **Applying God’s Word**

Knowing that God is a global God with a deep love for diversity, yet a tremendous heart cry for unity of worship helps shape the way we view the local congregation. Pastor Tim writes, “Are we reflecting in our gatherings and worship the kind of beauty and diversity of this future church we see in Revelation? ... Jesus is leading us forward into something better.” As we follow Jesus into His Kingdom, continue to discern as a group where our hearts ought to be pointed and focused. As Colorado Springs moves into its next 150 years, what does First Pres look like? What does that look like on a personal level for you this week?

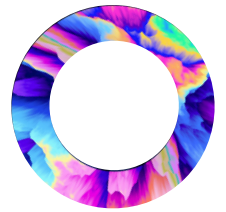
## **Witnessing God’s Word**

We see in Revelation 7 that all nations are gathered. The Word of salvation in Christ must and will go out into all the earth. What is your role this week in the mission of God?

I love the feeling of meeting someone who knows someone I know. Don't you love when that happens? Next week we will have Katie Fowler here in our pulpit from up in Denver where she and her husband Chuck are planting a church. I had lunch last week with someone who knows Katie. "Oh, you know Katie? Oh, I know Katie. Hey, we know Katie! Isn't she great? Yeah." It feels good. We have something in common. Some people call it the name game, but it's more than dropping names. For me it's finding connection. I remember being in Kenya for the first time in the summer of 2001. We were running a field Vacation Bible School for about 200 kids. There was an immediate connection. I love these kids! We were so different. My skin was so much whiter than their's—and hairier. The kids rubbed their hands up and down my forearms and laughed! But there was a connection. I was lying in bed that night wondering, what is this connection? Then I got it. They know Jesus. I know Jesus. We know somebody in common. The next day I looked into their eyes differently. "You know the same guy I know. You know the same Savior I know. He talks to you just like He talks to me. Only to me, He speaks English, contemporary American English. To you He speaks some English, but more Swahili or Kikuyu. I can see in your eyes, you have met the same Jesus I've met!"

Jesus is already in the future. When Jesus was born—follow me now—Jesus was born out of eternity and into linear time; Jesus took on flesh in the incarnation, and with flesh, took on the limitations of living in the present—having a past, present and future. But Jesus is already **Future Jesus** just as much as Jesus is Past Jesus and Present Jesus. So, as we look at this Revelation, we are seeing something that Jesus already sees. Have I blown your mind? I grew up watching a lot of Star Trek and Terminator movies, so this is not so hard for me. **Future Jesus** already sees the congregation we are reading about today as though it's way in the future, which, for us, it is. But it's not an idea, not a dream. It's a reality. It's already there, and we are living into it. It's an amazing church, a beautiful congregation, and it already exists in our future; it already exists, that church, where **Jesus Gathers the Nations**.

The picture is a diverse gathering, a plurality of different peoples, all worshipping Jesus with integrity and faithfulness to their own tribe, people and language. God loves the beautiful diversity of the peoples of the world, and, also, calls them into harmonious and unified praise to Jesus Christ the Savior. **Future Jesus** we see operates in every language and people of the planet we inhabit. All these different families and tribes and peoples belong to one

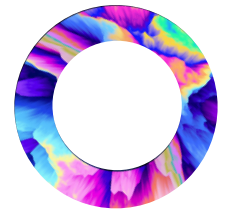


God. As it says in Ephesians, “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (Ephesians 3:14-15). So, a quick Happy Father’s Day to everyone. In our culture, we mostly get our last names from our fathers. I’m grateful for my Dad, and proud of our name, and I’m glad to know all names, every family name, is derived from one Father, God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. One family. Why is it so hard to live that out?

The last few years have seen a great deal of pain and disharmony surrounding issues of race and ethnicity in America. I want you to know, First Pres takes these issues very seriously. We didn’t launch off on social media or jump to conclusions on complex issues, but, as is the presbyterian way, we formed a committee! I know, I know, but that’s seriously a way of pursuing Jesus on an issue instead of tilting sails to the winds of a heated moment. So that’s what we did. A group of elders, including a pastor, met every week for 10 months, praying, discerning, studying how we are doing in regard to awareness and diversity. Are we reflecting, as a body of Christ, the diversity of God’s people? Are we reflecting, as an evangelistic outreach to Colorado Springs, the diversity of the people we are trying to reach with the Gospel? Are we reflecting in our gatherings and

worship the kind of beauty and diversity of this future church we see in Revelation, the future church Jesus can already see we are going to become in the end? You know, we think Jesus is leading us forward into great opportunities for growth. Not as a knee-jerk reaction to this or that, but in steady obedience to Jesus Christ our Lord, the Head of our Church, who is drawing us into the beautiful Kingdom and diverse church of Revelation, and who wants us to taste some of its joys today.

“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. 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’” (Revelation 7:9-10). Let me draw three points out of these two verses: **(1) We are in the future church, (2) Future Jesus gathers all nations, and (3) All nations have one Savior.** First, **(1) We are in the future church.** I just don’t want us to miss this. We get to be there. I don’t deserve it. I’m happy getting snuck in the back door. By God’s grace, we get to be there. John is living in a time when Christians are already starting to suffer for following Jesus. People are getting run out of town. John

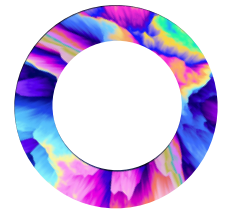


himself is exiled on a deserted island. People are losing their businesses, or getting attacked by mobs, or killed by stones like Stephen in Acts, or thrown off walls like Jesus' brother James. Don't miss the power of what John sees here. After the suffering, after the pain, after we all go through, whatever it is we all have to go through ... maybe you won't be martyred, you won't be tossed off a wall or have your business burned to the ground for your affiliation with Jesus (some will experience these things; some do). Maybe you will, maybe you won't, but in this life you will have tribulation, in this life you will have suffering, in this life you will find that things are not as they ought to be, and again and again, it will hurt. After all that, you and I, by God's grace, will be with Jesus. "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. 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'" (Revelation 7:16-17). That's a promise.

**(2) Future Jesus gathers all nations.** Look at this again: "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. They were wearing white robes and were

holding palm branches in their hands" (Revelation 7:9). John could tell that they were different. They're all wearing white robes; they're all holding palm branches. But John could tell they were different. Really different. Some of them, maybe they have different hair styles, different earrings or tattoos. Maybe they're wearing different shoes. Some of them have three-piece suits on under those white robes. Others are in flip-flops and shorts, sandals and a Maasai red-patterned blanket, or silk Mongolian jacket and hat. Of course their faces look different. Their skin is different. John wants to make it clear, he sees a lot of different kinds of people.

We often get just the word for nation, the Greek word "ethnos" where we get "ethnicity"—that's that first word, **Nation**. Jesus told the disciples to go out to all "ethnoi," all nations, and make disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). It's like the last thing He told us to do! But John goes past that word. **Tribe**. That's the word "phyle" where we get the biology term, phylum. (I never know if anybody's much interested in all these words, but bear with me.) John was just talking about tribes up above with the twelve tribes of Israel. That's like a family line, a genetic or historical



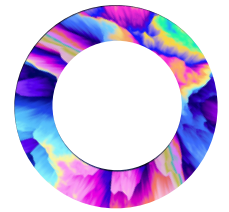


connection. Then **People**, “laos,” which usually means the crowds, the masses, large groups that run together. Those are my people, you know? We are in common, we share stuff, we like the same music, eat the same food, go to the same fishing spots, baseball games ... I don’t know. My people. But there’s people from every people. That’s what John sees. Then finally, **Language**. It’s the word “glossa” where we get glossary. Steve Martin said once about learning French, “It’s like those people have a different word for everything!” There’s little more defining for a culture than its language. All these different languages! All these people, all these tribes, all these nations, all these tongues, all in one place, all together! The miracle at Pentecost was not that people all spoke the same language; they spoke different languages, but the Holy Spirit brought understanding. Understanding. That’s the power of the Spirit of God.

The church in John’s time was only beginning to grasp how big, how wide, how broad the love of Jesus ran. Not just the Jews of Jerusalem, the Greeks too. Not just the Greeks, but even Romans. Not just Romans, but Egyptians, Ethiopians, Spanish, the Anglo-Saxons, the Persians, the Asians, the indigenous of every spit and spot of land straight around the globe! They are all there. They are all already there

in the future church with **Future Jesus**. And they are beautifully diverse. John could see that. They didn’t all give up their languages and customs and cultures to dissolve into one, bland, spiritual vanilla pudding. John could see, these people are from everywhere. Even Colorado, by God’s amazing grace. Here’s the point: diversity is part of God’s plan. We are not supposed to all dissolve into one another. God made 18,000 different species of birds. God likes the flavor and beauty of diversity.

And here comes the most amazing thing. God brings amazing diversity into astounding and surprising unity. **(3) All nations have one Savior**. “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. 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’” (Revelation 7:9-10). The throne and the Lamb. All nations. All peoples. One throne. One Lamb. They all wore white robes. Why? Because their robes, once stained and darkened by sin, by things they had done, by things they had suffered, those robes were washed white by the blood of the Lamb. “Come now, let us reason together, says the



Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). How? By the blood of the Lamb. Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world. They all wore white robes. They all welcomed the presence of Jesus with palm branches. They all cried out in loud voices, different languages, but all as one: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

What does salvation mean to people so different from us? What about a first-century Roman centurion? What does he need to be saved? Jesus. What if you’re a ninth-century German barbarian girl? What does salvation look like to her? It looks like Jesus. No, no, no. It’s different for all people. How about a Japanese Samurai warlord 300 years ago? What is salvation to him, from his perspective? Jesus. The one who came, the one who died, the one who rose again. “No. It’s different for all people. All people have different needs, different philosophies, different hopes, different salvations.” No. People are different. Beautifully different. Diverse. Salvation is the same. There is one God, the Father of us all. He sent His one Son, Jesus Christ. He died, once for all. He died to bring you home to God the Father for eternal life, to wash your robe, to set you free. He rose

from the dead. His name is Jesus, and “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

We can be the very best at bringing people together, church. The very best. The Romans were so confused by Christians. How do slaves and senators meet together in one room? How do women from Africa and slaves from Persia share a meal all at once? How are children and slaves included with businesswomen and soldiers and tax collectors? What in the world is this? I know someone you know. You know someone I know. Jesus. Jesus. **Future Jesus** invites you to taste this reality right now. Today. This moment is a moment to introduce yourself to Jesus. He already knows you but let’s pray to Him. Let’s open our hearts to Him and trust in His unifying, amazing, supernaturally uniting salvation. Follow me in prayer: *“Dear Jesus, You are the one on the throne, You are the saving Lamb of God, You are salvation for every person, every tribe, every nation who calls on you, You are my Savior, You are my Lord. Thank you for giving your life; now I give you mine. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

