

The Seventh Beatitude In Revelation

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

If there is a single passage in the Bible that ties all of the writings in the Bible together, it is the seventh beatitude in Revelation. In Genesis 3, the tree of life is removed from humanity. We learn in Revelation 22:14 that the tree of life is, once more, available to specific individuals. It is as though Genesis 3 and Revelation 7 stand as bookends to the subject of eternal life. The Tree of Life, once lost to sinful humanity, is found in God's plan of Salvation through the one made both Lord and Christ.

Their disobedience refused the blessing offered to Adam and Eve. The testimony of the Law and the Prophets is a continuous call to return to God and humbly obey His will. Those who believed the words given to them and obeyed were rewarded. Even after receiving an earthly reward, they all, like faithful Abraham, waited for an eternal home in the city built by God in heaven (Hebrews 11:8-16). Through Christ, that eternal home is offered to all those who obey the savior. Many, however, like Adam and Eve refuse to hear, believe, and obey.

The way this obedience is expressed in modern English translations worded differently in different translations. As many ask today, "Have you obeyed the gospel?" meaning "Have you believed the gospel and been baptized?" so the Greek texts available show the same kind of interpretation. Where the KJV and NKJV use "obey commandments," the NASV and ESV use "wash their robes" and read "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." We remember that Jesus taught one narrow way and gate in Matthew 7:13-14. Here heaven is depicted as being open to the saints with twelve gates (Revelation 21:12-13). These two passages are not in conflict since one describes the way to heaven, and the other represents the unrestricted entry available to the saints after they arrive.

One of the visions, as John was shown what awaited in heaven, is recorded in Revelation 7:13-15: "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, '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. 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.'"

This blessing, as are all those found in scripture, is offered to those who have sincere love for God, humble themselves before Him, and do the good works He prescribed (Ephesians 2:10). A study of Matthew 5-7, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4-6 will begin to define the basic principles of these works.

In writing to those in Corinth who had turned away from their idolatrous practices and now obeyed the gospel, Paul said: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Peter told those in Jerusalem who had cried out for Jesus' death; "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).

But baptism was and is not the end of the matter. We read in Acts 2:42-47 that they continued to learn, to grow in understanding, and live a much different life than had been their tradition. They were changed and walking in the new way which God, through Christ, commanded. They washed their garments, learned how to "stay clean", and continued as obedient children of God.

The blessing begins with the fellowship, partnership, brotherhood, mutual care, and admiration of being in a vast family. It is God's family. It has God as the Father, Jesus as His son and heir, and all those

with white robes as joint heirs, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ the King. The church on earth, composed of those in fellowship with Christ, will be delivered to the Father for eternity. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:22-24).

Are you one of those who have "washed your robe in the blood of the Lamb," following the narrow way, and prepared to enter into the "city built by God." Will you be one of those who enter in through the open gate, and for eternity, enjoy the fruits of the tree of life? If not, please let us help you prepare.