

The Vast Lostness

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[0 : 0 0] Revelation chapter 7. If you have your Bible, someone wants to turn to Revelation chapter 7. I hate so much that the book of Revelation is often misunderstood and misinterpreted and misrepresented.

The point of the book was to give a future hope to a persecuted church in Asia Minor by proclaiming not only a future victory by the Lord, but sharing that God was already victorious, that God was already on the throne.

And it's just going to get much better and much more obvious in the future, of course, after it gets worse. Never miss the beautiful scenes of the book of Revelation.

If you've not read it or you're not familiar with it, I want you to go home and read the amazing image of Christ walking among the churches that were hurting in Revelation chapter 1.

I want you to read about the amazing description of heaven at the end. But there's a beautiful image of heaven in Revelation 7 where God allows John to see a vision into heaven.

[1 : 2 0] And the scene is amazing. Revelation 7, beginning in verse 9, and it says this, And to the Lamb.

Amen. And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen.

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Amen. What an amazing scene. Can you imagine? Well, I will tell you what we can do. We can influence that crowd.

The reality is that most people that die won't be in that crowd. Only those that come through Christ make it to heaven.

[2 : 5 7] And Christ said himself in Matthew 7, verse 13 and 14, Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. The translation of what Christ said was that most people that die will not be in heaven.

But Christians are invited. Christians are commanded. Christians are empowered to carry the gospel message to the world, starting right there at our house and right around our house and going beyond that.

God has saved us. He has placed us. He has equipped us to make a difference in the world and to influence eternity. How do we do that?

The one way we do that is by sharing. We do it by sharing. What I love about this scene in Revelation 7 is that there are so many different types of people there.

- [4 : 0 6] You don't see distinctions by race. You don't see distinctions by politics. You don't even see distinctions by ball teams. It is just the blessed body of Christ focused upon Christ celebrating him around the throne.
- And Jesus gave us the Great Commission and told us to go and invite everyone we come in contact with to come and go with us.
- Do you remember when the Lord shared the story of the great banquet? The man prayed and prepared a great party and invited a bunch of people. They didn't come.
- They made up sorry excuses. One said, I bought some land. I need to go look at it. I would encourage him to look at it before he bought it. But one said, I bought some oxen. I need to go examine them. Another said, I got married. I can't come. I don't know if he didn't want to come. I don't know if he couldn't come.
- [5 : 0 5] I'm not really sure what his situation was. But either way, he didn't. And the banquet host said in Luke 14, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.
- And the servant said, Sir, what you've commanded has been done and there's still room. And the master said to his servant, Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in.
- To compel them to come in that my house may be filled. The Lord wants people to know that they are invited to come to Christ. And he calls his church, Christians, his servants to go and invite.
- Share your faith. We will impact the population of heaven when we share our faith. Not only that, but we also do it by praying.
- Pray for the lost. Now, if lost sounds offensive to you, I didn't come up with that. Jesus did. He called them lost.
- [6 : 1 8] Pray that God will burden your heart enough to be obedient to share your faith. Pray that God will work in the hearts of others that you come in contact with to work in their lives.
- Too many of us never do it. Pray that God will. And if you don't, I want you to pray that you will. We can talk about the deal when we went shopping.
- We'll talk about the deal that we got. We love to talk about our team. We love to talk about our kids or our grandkids. I remember there used to be a, and it's still around from time to time, but there used to be a popular car tag on the front of cars that said, let me tell you about my grandchildren.
- Which meant, don't you dare ask that lady about her grandchildren. That's what that meant. They were usually on the front of a Buick Century. And I owned one.
- And when I got home, I got ridiculed by my wife, who said, you look like every senior adult lady at the church riding around in that century. It was a nice car, and I have no problem with the senior adult ladies of the church.
- [7 : 3 6] So, but I traded it for an Explorer, so now I'm cool. But we'll cast our opinion on what in the world is going on, but we don't talk about the Lord.
- Somehow that may go too far. We don't care to discuss our kids. We don't care to discuss the deals that we got. We don't care to discuss our teams, our great insights, but Jesus?
- Man, it's hard to find the right time to bring him into it. Ain't that interesting? Why do you think that is? That's a strategy of the evil one, I promise you.
- Pray that we share. And then pray for the others that we share with. Matthew chapter 9, verse 36 through 38 says this.
- Pray that Christians will obey God and go.

- [8 : 58] And then pray for them as they go. At Christmas time, we celebrate our missionaries by praying for them. You'll find a prayer guide in the lobby that you can take with you.
- And pray for our missionaries on the field. Pray for our missionaries to have the spiritual and the physical and the emotional stamina. To deal with what they deal with. To deal with what they deal with.
- To deal with going to language school and learning language. When I went to Southeast Asia for a couple of weeks a couple of times. To help teach doctrine to church leaders in that area.
- And I was told by IMB missionaries over there that until one has been on the field in that area and learned Mandarin over eight years.
- They're not really ready to have a real conversation with somebody else. That's how difficult the language is. An in-depth conversation. We have missionaries who are going through.
- [10 : 03] And many of those who went through those language schools to learn that language. Are no longer allowed in that country. And have moved on. Pray for them to have the stamina to deal with that.
- To build relationships across cultures. To put their children in multicultural schools. Where the primary language is different than the one that the child of the missionary speaks.
- I know of a missionary serving in Africa. There's a French private school down the street that she. They sent their children to. In young age grade school.
- Not knowing the language. Great way to learn it. It's in the classroom. Go. Can't imagine that. Pray for missionaries that Southern Baptist lead at.
- Pray for ministries that Southern Baptist missionaries lead at refugee camps. In oppressed places. Pray for our African missionaries who minister to college students. Who are entrenched in traditions of Islamic faith.
- [11 : 11] Pray for our UK missionaries that are surrounded by people of the same language. In this very similar culture. They ride on the wrong side of the road. But the very similar culture. But are 1 to 2 percent Christian.
- As Kenny has shared with us from this pulpit. They are swallowed up by multiculturalism. That brings a cesspool of false religions. And by the Church of England.
- That's too many times just a cultural community of people to be involved in. I visited beautiful cathedrals over there. And I can tell you based on their advertisements. And based on what they had posted in their churches.
- They were anything but gospel centered. Pray. That God will move in those lands.
- Like he did 200 years ago. Pray for those who God is working in now to one day go. Pray and ask what he would have you do.
- [12 : 09] Pray and ask what he would have you to give. But understand that your prayers impact heaven. Let me give you an example right here. Right now.
- A great example. I hope it's okay. I'm going to share it. We have a man in this congregation. That was lost without Christ. By his testimony. He told me one Sunday morning.
- The sand is leaving my hourglass. He knew. He would die without the Lord. Some time ago he was traveling with his brother. His brother tried to share Christ with him.
- Last Easter. I asked each one of you to write down five names. And pray for them for five weeks. Leading up to Easter. About inviting them to come.
- That man's name was written down. On at least one of those cards. Somebody was praying here. His brother was sharing with him. There. He went to a.

[13 : 08] Somebody else invited him to come to church. Invited him to come to Christ. He went to a friend's funeral. Got convicted at that funeral.

Went to the funeral. Preacher's church that Sunday. Wanted something different. But still felt drawn to the Lord. Came here the next week. Attended here four to six weeks later.

He walked in my office and said. I need to get saved. And thank God he got gloriously saved. How? Because somebody shared. How?

Because somebody prayed. There was no orchestrated effort among them. Except by the spirit of God. And eternity was influenced and changed. By people's obedience.

And by their faithfulness. We impact the population of heaven. How? By sharing. By praying.

[14 : 03] And by going. Boots on the ground. Encouragement on the field. And people to help with the cause. May we strive to go as God gives us opportunity.

If God's leading you to go to the international mission field. Go. The question is. Are you willing? If you are. Dip your toe into that.

Maybe God's calling you to serve overseas. Please. You'll never be happy doing anything else. But what God's called you to do. And if God's not called you to stay. He's calling you to go. The task is too large for us not to go.

And the best thing we could do is go. And if you're willing. The international mission board will prepare you. And will train you. And will place you. And Southern Baptist will support you.

And the faithfulness of God's people will help you. To stay on the field without worrying whether you're going to get paid or not. Without worrying whether you're going to have to be able to stay or not. That is what else we can do.

[15 : 04] And I ask you to do it generously. As heaven depends on it. I'm convinced by God's design. And God blesses the faithfulness of his people by bearing fruit.

And fruit leads to life change. We influence heaven by going. We also influence heaven by giving. I make no bones about this.

Very clear about it. I ask you to give and to give generously. To an annual event that we do. And Southern Baptist churches across America do. And that is the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.

For international missions. Now if you don't know the back story. And many of you know it like the back of your hand. But if you don't know the back story. Lottie Moon was a missionary to China.

That had a burden for the lost. And she served faithfully. And the mission board ran out of money. And told her she needed to come home. And she didn't come home.

[16 : 02] She stayed. She grew so burdened. For the cause that she deprived herself. Her health failed her. And she was forced to come home.

And she died on the boat on the way home. But before she died. She said one way we could keep missionaries on the field. Is to start an annual offering at Christmas time.

So that missionaries would not have to come home. And many years after she died. That offering was named after her. That's what the Lottie Moon Christmas offering is.

In case you're wondering. It's like some little boy in church one day said. When are we ever going to pay that lady off? We've raised money for her every year. I know Christmas is coming.

A lot of people ask for a lot of things. Because hearts go out to others. However at Christmas. I know of no better place to give your offering. Above the tithe. Than to the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.

- [17 : 04] For international missions. And I say that with no strings attached. Because I'll tell you. We need to give and we need to give sacrificially. We take that offering in December. And every dime that goes in.
- To the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. None of it stays in Pickens. Every dime of it goes. To the international mission field. It'll buy bikes.
- It'll buy Bibles. It'll buy tents. It'll buy clothes. It'll buy food for missionaries. It'll help them stay another year. As they retire. It will allow those in seminary prepping now.
- To be able to go. And fill that void. Economies are different throughout the world. What it costs for a missionary to live in Japan. Listen to this.
- Is 30 times more than in rural southern Africa. A missionary's kid can go to school in Czech Republic for nearly \$600 a month.
- [18 : 05] But in Malaysia it costs twice that much. But the average of the missionary on the field is about \$65,000. Which is our goal this year for the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.
- And December is the time to give it. Now I want to be clear about something. You don't give that instead of the tithe. The tithe is not yours to dictate where it goes.
- The first tenth belongs to the Lord. And biblically that goes to the storehouse. It goes to the place where you're fed. Undesignated.
- Just given. And as God enables you above the tithe to give a free will offering. Give as God allows you. Let's do our part to share Christ with the world.
- With every nation. And let me share one more thing. Jesus said in Matthew 24 verse 14. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations.
- [19 : 20] And then the end will come. Did you catch that? When the gospel reaches every nation the Lord will return.
- What's our role in that? Our role is to share Christ. And support those who do. Let's do all we can to usher in the Lord's return.
- For 178 years the gospel has gone out through Southern Baptists and have moved forward without interruption.
- Let's not stop now. There are 12,019 people groups globally. A people group is an ethno-linguistic group with a common self-identity.
- Common language, culture, heritage. Of the 12,019, 7,303 of those, over half, are unreached.
- [20 : 24] No indigenous community of believing Christians are among them. And of that 12,000 people groups and 7,000 that are unreached.
- Listen to this. 3,145. That's a fourth of them. 3,145 are unengaged and unreached. No plan has been established to go to those people.
- They have not been penetrated with the gospel. That is primarily in Asia and primarily in Africa. The people groups make up a fourth.
- The people probably are much less because they're small groups with different languages that we don't know. 3,145.
- Unengaged and unreached. I want to be like that little girl was. I want you to be like that little girl was. Her elementary school called her mother and she asked a question that shocked her mom.
- [21 : 30] She said, is your family having financial difficulties? And mother said, no, not really. I don't know what you're referring to. She said, well, your daughter didn't have lunch money.

And I was wondering if y'all were having some kind of difficulty. She said, I gave her lunch money. She said, well, she didn't have any. And so when the little girl got home, she said, didn't I give you some lunch money the other day for you to take to school?

The little girl acknowledged that her mother had. She said, why did you tell the teacher that you didn't have any money? She said, because I didn't. She said, I wanted to give to Honeymoon. I had some change that I could have given, but I wanted to give dollars to that mission offering for Honeymoon.

Honeymoon. The mother knew what she was talking about. She was talking about Lottie Moon. We are surrounded in this world by vast lostness.

And people are dying at a rapid rate. 2,573 plus have died since I started preaching. Most of them without the Lord.

[22 : 47] Heaven will be grand. And I want to take as many people with us as we possibly can. Hell is horrible and getting worse.

But let's not miss a moment of opportunity. We have an opportunity to be a part of something much larger than us.

We can influence the population around the throne of God. Be faithful.

We are surrounded by vast lostness. With every head bowed.

And every eye closed. I ask you this morning first, do you know the Lord Jesus personally? How important it is for you to know that you know the Lord.

[23 : 53] That you surrendered your life to Him to follow Him. That you've asked Him to forgive you of your sins and to come into your life and to change you.

That you've committed your life to follow Him. If you've never done that, I want you to know you can do that today. You can take care of that right this morning.

I'd be happy to guide you in that process. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've never made that public. It's a private decision you've made. You've never made that public. Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me before men, I'll be ashamed of you before my fathers.

Because it's not real if it's not shared, quite honestly. So I encourage you today to make that public. As God will lead you. I'll be happy to guide you in that process. Maybe God's drawing you to this congregation.

And you know this is where you are to be. I encourage you this morning to just follow the Lord. Follow the Lord. If He leads you here, you join us.

[24 : 57] Let's get done for the kingdom what God would have us to get done. Maybe you're here this morning and you just need to put something before the Lord. Maybe you've got a burden for somebody.

Maybe you've got a burden that you're not doing and everything you need to be doing. I don't know what God's saying to you, but I know you'll never be satisfied unless you do exactly what He tells you. So I encourage you today to just be obedient, to just be faithful.

We'll stand and sing in just a moment, but more important than that, just obey God as He speaks to your heart and life. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you, dear God, for your love for us. And I ask, dear God, that you will lead us today.

Lead us to simply be obedient and follow exactly what you'd have us to do. In Jesus' precious name, amen.