

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 in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

***“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”***

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

***“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”***

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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.***

**¹⁶ Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat upon them,
nor any scorching heat.**

**¹⁷ 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.”** (NIV84)

YOUR VICTORY CELEBRATION

How do you celebrate a victory? How do you celebrate a special occasion? Maybe it’s a nice dinner? Maybe a fancy bottle of wine? Maybe you take a trip?

Before she was my wife, Tricia took a trip to Europe and when she was there, she bought a bottle of fancy wine. She thought it would be a fun way to celebrate a special occasion. And she was right! The problem is I’m not sure what her definition of “special” is! We’ve been married since and even

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had a 10-year anniversary a few years back! We've had 5 children since. And there on the wine rack sits the bottle, just waiting for a really special occasion, apparently!

How do you celebrate victories? When your team wins, what do you do? You throw party, you dress up in your team's colors. You probably hoot and holler and cheer like a crazy person. When the Cubs won the World Series this week, there were lots of excited Hackmanns. There were 5 Hackmanns that even were jumping on the couch. I'll give you a second to figure that one out – Addison can't jump yet, and I'm not really a Cubs fan – though I was happy to see them win - so that leaves 4 children and 1 adult (that isn't me) that were so excited that they started jumping on the couch! It was an exciting victory, one that Cubs fans have been waiting a lifetime to see!!

Today through John's vision in Revelation, we get to see what our victory party is going to be like! It's a victory party that every single person there has waited their entire lives to see! And it's where we will celebrate, too for endless days with Jesus, Rejoice, hooting and hollering and singing his praises forever and ever. Heaven is the place where we will engage in the **Greatest Victory Celebration Ever!**

When a team wins the title, it's pretty normal for them to host a parade! They parade through the city and the fans line the streets just to catch a glimpse of the victorious team.

The Cubs had their parade on Friday – from their home field Wrigley stadium, down Michigan Avenue to Grant Park. And when they arrived there they were met by 5 Million cheering fans! If you didn't see the coverage, Google it when you get home! It was a mass of humanity! And they were all there for the same reason – they were on the same team and they were victorious! They waved their banners, and sang their songs. Side by side with total strangers and it didn't matter a bit because their team won!!

With that image in your head, listen to the words that John uses to describe what he saw:

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 in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

***“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”***

The sea of blue that gathered at Grant Park on Friday is a drop in the bucket compared to those that will be clad in hometown white in heaven! They counted that group in Chicago, but we're told that this group is greater than anyone could count! Thousands of years' worth, hundreds of generations of faithful followers lined up at the Greatest Victory Celebration Ever!

And their fight song?

***“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”***

Salvation belongs to our God! He gives it to whomever he chooses. But that can be a two-edged sword, really! If God gives salvation to whomever he pleases, if he welcomes into the wedding feast those that he’s chosen to invite, that’s not necessarily a great thing for us, is it? Because we don’t deserve the invite! We don’t bring anything to the table and there is nothing inside of us that can catch God’s attention, at least not in a favorable way! We are sinners through and through. Day after day it’s our own song that we sing, instead of God’s! Minute after minute, we are exposed for chasing after earthly victories instead of rejoicing in the heavenly one that God gives. Seconds tick away and show just how selfish, just how self-absorbed we truly are!!!

Salvation belongs to our God and he’s the only who should have it, because we are unworthy and vile sinners. We are loveless, thoughtless and meaningless in God’s sight!

But God doesn’t keep salvation bottled up! He doesn’t hoard it for himself, instead he offers it freely to all who believe! He wants us to be with him so badly that he was willing to come to earth to suffer and die! He was willing to endure such pain so that we could have pleasures eternal! He was willing to be a sacrifice so that we could be made saints! He’s shed his blood for us and has washed us clean through the waters of baptism. He’s put faith in our hearts that we can believe that God has saved us by grace.

Salvation belongs to our God!: It’s true and it’s the rallying cry of God’s chosen people! Salvation belongs to our God and our God is the God of free and faithful saving grace! He showers us with undeserved love and willing gives that salvation to you and to me! That’s what we can join the saints in the **Best Victory Celebration Ever**

The King David reminds us in Psalm 5 that

- ⁴ You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil;
with you the wicked cannot dwell.***
⁵ The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; (v. 4-5)

We cannot come before God as we are! But our Savior has purified us. He changes us and makes us pure and holy in God’s sight! He robes us in his righteousness, in his perfect holiness. We are covered by his perfection, his radiance, his glory!

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

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

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We've been showered in blood! We've been covered in love. We've been clothed in perfection!! Jesus makes us exactly what we need to be to stand in God's presence and to sit at his side forever! What we couldn't do on our own, Jesus has done – and freely by his grace!!

Jesus has won for us a victory! He did all the work! He took on all the pressure! He endured the pain that brought us this glorious gain! Jesus has won the victory and he invites us to share it! He invites us to celebrate with him what his love means for you and for me! He welcomes us to the **Greatest Victory Celebration Ever!!**

And let's not wait until heaven to celebrate! Let's start today! We can celebrate by looking to serve him with our lives! He's made us saints on earth. He's made us holy, so let's thank him! Let's praise his holy name that he has made us to be what he is!! Let's bring glory to God's name and encourage others to do the same! Let's reflect Christ's love in the way that we support one another at church. Let's look for friends who need a shoulder to cry on, who'd like to share in their joys with you! Let's look for the needs of others and use our gifts to fill those needs! Let's have Jesus heart and sacrifice to reach the lost with the love of their Savior! Let's work together and as individuals too, that Jesus' name and his love might be shared!!

And when the time for working is done, we'll be welcomed home. Then the glorious victory will be fully realized! Then we will join those who have gone before and inherited glory! There in heaven it will be said of us:

***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.***

***¹⁶ Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.***

***The sun will not beat upon them,
nor any scorching heat.***

***¹⁷ 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."

I don't know how you celebrate a victory! But you can't top this! I can't wait to join you at **The Best Victory Celebration Ever!** Amen.