Revelation 7:9-17

Learner Session Guide

Focus Statement

Revelation reveals a Jesus who cleanses all people who follow him.

Key Verse

These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7:14

The Cleansing Jesus

Focus Image

The Great Family (La grande famille) 1963 Rene Magritte (1898–1967 / Belgian). Oil on canvas, Private collection. © Bridgeman Art Library / SuperStock

Gather

Check-in

Take this time to connect or reconnect with the others in your group. Be ready to share new thoughts or insights about your last session.

Pray

God of hope, when we are overwhelmed by life's trials and tribulations, you remind us that Jesus your Son has gone before us. Cleansed through his death and resurrection and trusting in his life, may we claim the promise of the multitudes that have gone before us and serve you in love and praise all of our days. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus Activity

Reflect on the Focus Image. What feelings does this image evoke within you? What do you notice about the background and the scene within the bird? Why do you think the artist called this painting *The Large Family*?

Notes

Open Scripture

Read Revelation 7:9-17.

- What questions does this text raise for you?

- Do you find anything in the text unusual or surprising?

- What trial or ordeal in your life comes to mind when you hear this text?

Join the Conversation

Literary Context

1. In Revelation 7, the four angels holding back the four great winds are ordered to stop until the servants of God have been sealed (7:3). John hears the number of those who are sealed (7:4-8) and then sees the multitude (7:9-17).

- List the differences and similarities between these two groups.
- Discuss the impact of presenting these two groups together.

2. Many see Revelation 7 as an interlude between the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-17) and the opening of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1-5). Yet, it may be more helpful to see the chapter as a continuation of the sixth seal.

- Read Revelation 6:12-17. How might the multitude of Revelation 7 be connected to Revelation 6:16-17?

Historical Context

1. Though many assume that Roman persecution led to the writing of Revelation (around 95 c.e.), we do not know of any organized persecution at this time.

Read the following texts, and identify where and how the early church was persecuted.

- Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60
- 2 Corinthians 11:21-29
- Revelation 2:8-11, 12-13; 3:7-13

2. When John describes the comfort and reward that the great multitude receives (7:15-17), he draws upon promises that God gives in both the prophets and the Psalms. Read the following texts and compare them with the promises in Revelation 7:15-17:

- Isaiah 25:8
- Isaiah 49:10
- Ezekiel 34:23
- Psalm 23:1-23

Lutheran Context

1. Using the Lutheran principle of "Scripture interprets Scripture," read Psalm 51:6-10 and Isaiah 1:16-18. Discuss how these passages help you understand Revelation 7:9-17.

2. Lutherans emphasize that we are justified by grace through faith. In other words, we are set right before God only through the love God shows for us through Jesus Christ, not through our own works or actions.

- The multitude "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). What does this image tell us about how we are justified or made right with God? How does the multitude respond to being justified and cleansed?
- Draw or describe how you would picture justification by grace through faith.

Devotional Context

1. In Revelation 7, the great multitude gathers in the heavenly realm after going through a "great ordeal" and being cleansed.

- Reflect on a time of struggle within your life. How did your faith or your faith community help you through that time?
- Where do you see others struggling around you? Write down one thing you could do this week to help someone who is struggling.

2. Sing a song or hymn praising the Lamb who sheds his blood to cleanse us.

Notes