

“With One Loud Voice”

Revelation 7:9–17

January 11, 2026

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Revelation 7:9–17 (PowerPoint)

Preface

Up until last week, over the course of two services—the New Year’s Day service and the New Year service—we have been reflecting on this year’s theme Scriptures, Ezekiel chapter 37 and Proverbs 17:1 and 15:17.

Above all, in the words of Ezekiel chapter 37, the Lord God says, “Make them one in your hand; I will make them one in My hand,” telling us that the two nations which had been divided in discord would once again become one, and that we, humanity, will one day be made one again.

And the ultimate fulfillment of what He spoke—the completed form of the Kingdom of God—is the Word from the Book of Revelation that we have just read.

The completion of the Kingdom of God is also reconciliation among us humans, reconciliation between person and person, and the completion of peace.

From the beginning of the Bible, Genesis, up to the Letter of Jude immediately preceding the Book of Revelation, Scripture vividly records the distorted peace of this world, the imperfection of things that are proclaimed as peace, the longing for true and complete peace, and the collisions among human beings. But here, in the Book of Revelation, which is the final book of the Bible, the image of completed peace is recorded.

In the very final chapters of the Bible, Revelation chapters 21 and 22, the new heaven and the new earth centered on Jesus Christ, who is light, are described. There, not even a speck of evil exists.

There is only a place where complete peace can be enjoyed, and there is the completed form of peace brought about by the Lord Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace—the completion of the ministry of reconciliation.

This is the vision we saw last week in Ephesians 1:10: “All things in heaven and on earth are gathered together in Christ.”

The new heaven and the new earth are formed with the throne of the Lamb, Jesus, at the center, and there are people who serve before the throne of God the Father and the Lamb Jesus.

And what kind of people those who serve are is specifically shown to us in the content of Revelation chapter 7 that we read earlier.

Part One

First of all, these people are those who, because they believed in the one and only true God and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, have passed through great and many tribulations.

They are those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb Jesus and have been given eternal life.

They are those who, because they persevered in living as disciples of Jesus Christ, were permitted to go before God's presence, inheriting the kingdom of heaven and becoming heirs of the Kingdom of God.

And above all, they are people who have been justified by faith, reconciled to God through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, who possess peace with God, and who rejoice in and taste the completion of peace with God (Romans 5:1–10).

They will never again feel disappointed with God, nor be seized by bitter or resentful feelings because things turned out differently from what they expected and their hearts were not satisfied.

They will never stumble over God, nor fall into the temptation to stop believing in God and walking in faith in the one true Triune God, nor be wrapped in doubts such as, "Perhaps there is no God." They are people who have been brought into an eternally continuing, perfectly reconciled relationship and peace with the Triune God—the Father God, the Lamb Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, they have also been set free from all the conflicts, struggles, disputes, and discord among human beings, which humanity has suffered from and inflicted upon one another throughout history.

As the author of the Book of Revelation, the apostle John, says in verse 9,

Revelation 7:9 (PowerPoint)

"a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb"

John saw, in the vision guided by God, the people who had been freed from discord such as hostility, mutual judgment, clashes, competition, conflicts, and strife.

The scale of this multitude gathered around the throne of God the Father and the Lamb Jesus is immense.

And the greatest characteristic of this multitude is that, while it is an innumerable great crowd from all nations, it is at the same time composed of people who use diverse languages.

Part Two

In the New Year's Day service, I spoke about humanity building the Tower of Babel. In order to express hostility toward God, humanity built the Tower of Babel, and because of their pride, violence, and corruption, they were punished by having their spoken language—their language itself—confused. Because their words no longer communicated, their hearts no longer communicated; because their hearts no longer communicated, they could no longer live together. Instead of restoring communication through language, they scattered over the face of the whole earth.

As a result of no longer understanding one another's language, they eventually became enemies, adversaries, quarreling, refusing to yield to one another, opposing one another, giving rise to conflicts, disputes, and wars—creating a world that seems to have no other hell than this.

Rather than becoming one and united on the shared foundation that they were precious and holy beings created in the image of God, they emphasized differences of language, tribe, culture, region, nation, and background, producing countless conflicts, clashes, and discord.

However, these conflicts, clashes, and discord come to an end in the heavenly kingdom centered on Jesus Christ, in the Kingdom of God, in the new heaven and the new earth. There will be no more fighting or warring on the basis of differences such as language, tribe, culture, region, nation, or background.

Rather, these "differences," in Christ, become a rich diversity that praises the depth, height, breadth, and length of God's embrace.

Revelation 7:9–12 (PowerPoint)

Those who have been set free from conflict, clash, and discord in Jesus Christ fall down before the throne, worship God, and praise the Lamb Jesus with a loud voice.

Not just a loud voice.

"With one loud voice."

In verse 10,

Revelation 7:10 (PowerPoint)

"They cried out with a loud voice."

This “loud voice” is not a collection of countless diverse and miscellaneous voices from an innumerable crowd made up of many different kinds of people, but rather “one loud voice.”

From the impression of the Japanese language, it may sound like many people each raising their own voices—many loud voices. However, when we look at the Greek language, this “loud voice” is written not in the plural but in the singular.

That is, “one loud voice.”

This is well expressed in the English Bible.

The English Bible says:

“They cried out in a loud voice.” (PowerPoint)

Not “in loud voices,” plural, but “in a loud voice,” singular.

What had been scattered and fragmented into diversity of languages, tribes, cultures, regions, nations, and backgrounds has been gathered into one in Christ, bound together by the bond of peace, led into unity by the blood of the Lamb Jesus. Not with confused words and voices that cannot communicate hearts, but with “one voice,” as people whose words and hearts communicate with one another, they praise God the Father and the Son, the Lamb Jesus.

This is the completed form of human reconciliation and the Kingdom of God as a community of peace.

There, conflict will never arise again.

What exists there is only the eternal reconciliation and peace between God and humanity, and between person and person.

Furthermore, there is the completed work of God’s re-creation, in which all things in heaven and on earth are gathered together in Christ—the vision in which all creation, including humanity, is once again newly formed into one body that eternally supports one another, eternally respects one another, and eternally lives in mutual circulation. Verses 11 and 12.

Revelation 7:11–12 (PowerPoint)

The angels who preserve the order of all creation made by God, and the mysterious four living creatures who symbolize creation, go together with the innumerable multitude before the presence of God and the Lamb Jesus, worshiping and offering praise.

That is, here we also see the fulfillment of reconciliation and peace not only between God and humans and among humans, but between humans and creation, between humans and all things, and among all created things themselves.

In Isaiah chapters 11 and 65—passages I personally love very much—the ultimate peace and reconciliation of all things created by God, the new heaven and the new earth, the Kingdom of God, are depicted.

Isaiah 11:6–9 (PowerPoint)

Isaiah 65:17, 24–25 (PowerPoint)

This was originally the state of perfect peace and order of all things—“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”—between God and humans, among humans, and between humans and all creation.

But this was broken by human sin, and the world of violence, corruption, and pride in which we struggle, writhe, suffer, and cause suffering is the world that presently exists—a world destined to decay and perish.

And yet, Scripture promises that there is a time of God when the original state will be restored—no, because the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God Himself, has been offered as a sacrifice, it will be “an even greater peace, a qualitatively different world of peace, a new heaven and a new earth,” that will be re-created.

Those who have been promised entry into that new heaven and new earth, who make that entry alone their inheritance, their portion, their joy, and their hope, and who are led and expected by God to engage, in the place where they are now set, in the missionary work of embodying the peace that is in Christ—these are we Christians who believe in Jesus Christ.

Part Three

The apostle Paul says in Romans 12:18,

Romans 12:18 (PowerPoint)

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with all people.”

As I meditate on this Word, David comes to mind.

When we read the Old Testament, we repeatedly discover God saying things such as, “For David’s sake, for David’s sake, for David’s sake I will be patient with you; for David’s sake I will not destroy you now. I want you to be like David. I love David.”

Moreover, at the very end of the New Testament, in Revelation 22:16, Jesus Himself, when speaking of Himself, says, “I am the root of David.” Thus, all the way to the very end of the Bible, there is God’s continual reference to this person, David.

So I began to think about why God would speak of David so repeatedly, almost as if longing for him, saying, “David, David.”

As I did so, it became clear to me that David was a person who sought to live exactly according to the Word of God spoken by the apostle Paul: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with all people."

Living in an age of warfare, a time in which fighting with other nations was almost synonymous with life itself, and in circumstances where, as king, he had to fight and could hardly survive without fighting, we can see that David nevertheless tried, as much as possible and wherever possible, to choose not to fight.

Instead of fighting, he appears as a humble person who sought to express the Lord's will: "Live at peace with all people."

This was true even toward King Saul, who persistently sought David's life and was clearly committing wrong and evil. It was also true toward his son Absalom, who tried to drag David down from the throne and drove him once again into flight in the wilderness.

Even when those whose lives had been spared by David—those who had been given social standing and restored to dignity through David's consideration and care, treated as human beings in society for the first time—suddenly turned their backs on him, betrayed him, and even sought his life, David still did not respond with anger. Instead, he showed compassion, sympathizing with the circumstances that could change people so drastically, extending mercy and words of consideration, and saying things like, "Perhaps God intends to punish my sin. Even if they curse me, leave them alone. I desire that God's will be done, and I wish above all to be one who preserves peace."

I believe that David was a person who truly knew what kind of God God is, what God desires, and that the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the Prince of Peace—and that he sought to live out what he knew.

And this, surely, is what pleased God.

Part Four

Please forgive me for speaking personally again, but recently there has been a situation in which my relationship became somewhat strained with someone who has been a very dear benefactor in my life—someone I could never forget, with whom I had enjoyed a very good relationship.

At first, I became stubborn and thought, "I am the one who is right." But as I prayed, read the Word, and listened to the message at the Wednesday service, I was given the thought, "First, I myself must acknowledge my own sinfulness, my own poverty." Even when I tried to brush that thought aside and forget it because it offended my pride, the pressing sense of conviction did not leave me.

Then, with a feeling of surrender before God, I said to that person, "I am sorry. It is because of my lack of ability. Please forgive my inadequacy."

As we continued to exchange words several more times after that, I was given peace.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God," and I was reminded that before saying those words, He also said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I came to realize that perhaps making peace begins from acknowledging that one is poor in spirit—that before God, I am poorer than anyone else, more sinful than anyone else, more evil than anyone else, and a person who cannot insist on my own righteousness. And I was also given the insight that the apostle Paul, while confessing, "I am the foremost of sinners," devoted his life to striving to "live at peace with all people, so far as it depends on him."

Conclusion

For those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God, in which complete and perfect peace has been accomplished, is promised.

In the Kingdom of God, we are promised to live eternally in peace.

Therefore, we possess peace without end and rest without end.

Then, for that reason, let us desire to be peacemakers.

In order to be peacemakers, let us desire to be believers who are the first to acknowledge that we are poor.

For the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

Let us pray.

Benediction: Romans 12:18