

Revelation 7:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Analysis

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.... This verse from Revelation's vision of sealed servants and innumerable multitude - god's protection and salvation employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 7:17 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?
2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?

3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	τῶν	ἀρνίου	τῶν	ἀνὰ	μέσον	τῶν	θρόνου
For	which	the Lamb	which	is in	the midst	which	of the throne
G3754	G3588	G721	G3588	G303	G3319	G3588	G2362
ποιμανεῖ	αὐτῶν	καὶ	ὀδηγήσει	αὐτῶν	ἐπὶ	ζώσας	πηγὰς
shall feed	their	and	shall lead	their	unto	living	fountains
G4165	G846	G2532	G3594	G846	G1909	G2198	G4077
ὕδατων	καὶ	ἐξαλείψει	τῶν	θεὸς	πᾶν	δάκρυον	ἀπὸ
of waters	and	shall wipe away	which	God	all	tears	from
G5204	G2532	G1813	G3588	G2316	G3956	G1144	G575
τῶν	ὀφθαλμῶν	αὐτῶν					
which	eyes	their					
G3588	G3788	G846					

Additional Cross-References

John 4:14 (Parallel theme): But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 4:11 (Parallel theme): The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

Revelation 21:4 (References God): And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revelation 22:1 (References God): And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Psalms 23:5 (Parallel theme): Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Revelation 21:6 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

John 10:11 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Isaiah 25:8 (References God): He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

John 10:14 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Jeremiah 2:13 (Parallel theme): For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.