

## YOUR FIRST DAY IN HEAVEN

### Message 8

INTRO: Well, for the past while we have considered the altar of Revelation 6. We would be almost done if I had not run into something I had not expected to run into. I debated, should I seek to cover it here, or should I deal with this subject by itself in the future? If so, it will add some messages that I need to do in order to understand the white robes of this passage. Then I did not know if I would have time to study this matter before I got to it in preaching.

And so, after over a month of considering this, I opted to do so now. I have several reasons for dealing with the subject now before us. First, dealing with the subject now will help you understand what I want to tell you when we come to the white robes. Second, it will open a whole new window in your understanding. You will get to think through some things you will most likely never have thought through before. This will stretch the most mature believer, and you will be challenged in your thinking. And if, in the end you disagree with some of the conclusions I have come to, I will understand that. Either way, it will be good for you to think through this subject for yourself.

Third, when you read through the Bible, as many of you are, and you read about the tabernacle or the temple and what was in them and how they were constructed and used, this will help put more life to your reading and give you things to watch for. And further, a number of you have set up the modal of the tabernacle that has been produced here in our province, and one home-schooling family is just going to be doing so now. And this will add to your understanding some details that you will not have been taught in other studies. And last, I had a desire myself to understand this subject and put it into a format in which I hopefully will be able to refine in future studies.

And now, by way of review, we ask, how did those who arrive at this altar get there in the first place? Well, somewhere in life came a time of true repentance from sin and they exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the essential first step. Here all must begin; rich and poor, small and great, black or white,

red or yellow; all must begin here. It is the first major humbling of man before God. Then must follow a life of faithfulness. Recently I have pondered Jesus' words to the Jews, *If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed*. Those who ultimately arrive in glory are called, they are chosen and they are faithful.

Then, to arrive at the altar one of two things must happen next; death or the rapture. We cannot go there in this body. And those of our text were martyred, and so died. Then they were transported to glory by the angels and thus arrived at the altar. When they had entered the white fence, or heaven, they came to the altar. And when they had a chance they requested vengeance on those who had slain them, so it took a change to get them acquainted with the place where they now were.

What we looked at in the last two messages was the recommendation that at this altar, anything that was not fit for heaven was taken care of. And like the altar on earth, it took care of that which is not fit for God. All sins of ignorance and all carnality was taken care of. And I recommend without fear of error, that when we get past the judgment seat of christ, nobody who arrives, Calvinist or Arminian, or any other issue will have trouble getting along with anybody else who is also here. If we were wrong, we will congratulate those who were right, and that without any hypocrisy. If we were right, those of the opposite view will have no trouble congratulating us.

Turn once more to Revelation 6. I want to share some new things with you and to do that, we have to look at one aspect of the tabernacle in greater detail. We are now at our fourth and last main point of these messages. It is this: What happens to the believer after the altar according to this passage? In this message I will only introduce our new subject. And to show you what that is, let us read Revelation 6:9-11 once more:

*9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.*

*10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

11 *Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

In the words, "Then a white robe was given to each of them" we have our new subject. I want to begin by giving you an important proposition; make, what I see as an important point, and ask some important questions. Then we want to begin to answer those questions. So, that is what is now before us.

Now let me mention this. A number of things I have covered in these messages were not new to a number of you. The thing you might not have connected them with is that possibly they happen on the first day or at the beginning of the believer's new life in heaven. But now we will enter an area that, I think, will be as new to all of you as it was to me.

#### IV. WHAT THE BELIEVER EXPERIENCES AFTER THE ALTAR

##### A. Background To Understanding The Robes

##### 1. Important Proposition re: the Robes

So we begin with the proposition. It is this: The giving of white robes to each believer happens, not at this altar, but at the next piece of furniture in heaven, which was also in the tabernacle on earth. So let me ask this: if you enter the court of the tabernacle by going through the one gate, you come first to what? The brazen altar, where the sacrifices were made. And here is our next question: What is the next piece of furniture you meet? It is the laver. Now remember that the tabernacle on earth was a replica of the one in heaven. It is here I believe the white robes are given.

##### 2. Important Point

Turn now to Luke 16. I want to make an important point here before we go further. Luke 16 is another important passage that gives us a large window into heaven. In this chapter Lazarus went to heaven. Verse 22 says, *So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the*

angels to Abraham's bosom. Then it says, *The rich man also died and was buried.*

23 *"And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

24 *"Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'*

25 *"But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.*

Now all we are told about Lazarus' experience after he died is that the angels took him to heaven, and that there he was comforted in Abraham's bosom. We are not told anything about the altar or the white robes of Revelation 6. We go from when the angels took him to heaven to where he is comforted in Abraham's bosom. Jesus does not deal with any things that happen in between, though it would seem obvious from Revelation 6 that other things happen in between.

My point is that Revelation 6:9-11 tells us about the altar and then the white robes. But we do not know if or what happened in between those two events. In verse 9, John saw the souls under the altar. I have recommended that things take place at this altar that we are not told of here and we gather that possibility from other Scriptures.

So we are now told that a white robe was given to each of them. And here is our question: does this take place at this altar, or after they leave this altar? And I recommend that they pass from this altar to the next piece of furniture in heaven and we are not given those details here, but there is a reason that brings me to such a conclusion.

I want you to notice something very important. These martyrs are given something with which they did not arrive in heaven. It is white robes. And I have recommended that these believers have gotten all cleaned up at the altar, and I think that for that reason, they are now fit to wear white clothes. And while we are here, notice how individual heaven is for people. They were not given a box full of white robes. It says, "A white robe was given to each of them." Now we do not know what all happens here, but we do know something happens. These martyrs arrived without white garments, and when they are done, they have white robes.

I mentioned in an earlier message that I see this verse, not as a still picture, but a movie. As Christians die on earth and enter heaven, they are processed here, not accumulated. As they come, the matters that need to be dealt with to prepare them for heaven take place first. Then they are rewarded for their service as Christians on earth and then, I propose they move to the second piece of furniture in the tabernacle, the laver, and here they are given white robes and we will look at this later. I believe this has been happening ever since Abel was martyred in Genesis 4.

### 3. An important observation

We want to make an important observation now. Let me begin with a question: The altar on earth was a piece of furniture in the tabernacle. So we know that this altar is part of the real tabernacle in heaven. Now here is our question: Do white robes have anything to do with the tabernacle? Can we learn anything about these white robes from the tabernacle?

Well, turn with me to Leviticus 8. When we come to Leviticus 8, the tabernacle had just been built. All of what we learn here is full of biblical doctrine. In this chapter, Israel has just fled Egypt, and they have just crossed the Red Sea. In Egypt they had slaughtered the Passover lamb and put the blood on the doorposts of

their homes and the death angel passed over their homes. Therefore it is called the Passover. It pictures justification by faith. Egypt is a picture of the world, and when we get saved, we are first justified by faith before we leave the world. That is the idea of the altar.

Then they were baptized. So listen to 1 Corinthians 10:1-4:

*1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,*

*2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,*

*3 all ate the same spiritual food,*

*4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

Now you see, after the Passover, is the feast of First-fruits. First-fruits is the picture of resurrection. And you know the story. Israel crossed the Red Sea, and experienced death, burial, and resurrection. And so, when they had crossed and the waters swallowed the Egyptian army, it pictured resurrection. And so, once they crossed the Red Sea, they were on the way to Canaan.

All of this pictures great truths. First-fruits pictures the resurrection. So, three days and three nights after their Passover lamb was slaughtered, they are singing the deliverance of resurrection. Now somebody tell me, how long from the resurrection, or First-fruits until Pentecost? Fifty days. Penta is fifty.

And who can tell me where they were and what that is significant of? Well, it is the giving of the law, at Mount Sinai. And after the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, we come to our chapter in Leviticus. Here is

what happened. God gave Moses the instructions for the building of the tabernacle. It was patterned after the one in heaven. And so first, all the materials for the building of the tabernacle were collected. Then the tabernacle with all that belonged to it was made. Second, the clothing for the priests were made, and then the priests were installed into office. After their installation into office, they then began to carry out the duties of the sacrifices.

And what I want us to see relates to the installation of the priests into their office of ministry at the tabernacle. And for this we are at Leviticus 8 and we begin in verse 1:

*1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

*2 "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, the anointing oil, a bull as the sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread;*

*3 "and gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."*

*4 So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. And the congregation was gathered together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*

*5 And Moses said to the congregation, "This is what the LORD commanded to be done."*

*6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.*

In this passage Aaron is being installed as the high priest, and this special group of Levites are being installed as priests. And first, both Aaron and the priests are washed. This is most significant, as we will see later. We go on to verse 7:

*7 And he put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the intricately woven band of the ephod, and with it tied the ephod on him.*

You see, first the High Priest is dressed and anointed for ministry. In the NT book of Hebrews we learn that Jesus Christ is our High Priest. So Aaron's work here is a picture of Christ. The next time you read the book of Hebrews, you might read it with this in mind.

But we go now to verse 13:

*13 Then Moses brought Aaron's sons and put tunics on them, girded them with sashes, and put hats on them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Now I ask you, what color was the clothing the priests put on? And you will have guessed it already. It was white. We are getting a connection to white robes. We go now to Exodus 39. We begin in verse 27 where we have the making of the clothing that the priests would wear. We begin in verse 37:

*27 And they made coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons,*

*28 And a mitre of fine linen, and goodly bonnets of fine linen, and linen breeches of fine twined linen,*

*29 And a girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, of needlework; as the LORD commanded Moses.*

By the way, let me make this observation. Today, the Jews have prepared almost all the utensils for the future tabernacle. They have also made the clothing for the priests, just as it is described in our passage. There is an air of expectancy among many Jews, and I believe we are once more close to the time where the temple will be rebuilt and sacrifices will resume.

The point we want to note here is that the color of the clothing is white. Now I want to pause here and tell you a little story. I have told it before, but I think you won't mind my retelling it. It has to do with these white robes. I want to read a part of a Palm Sunday message on Zechariah 9:9 I did some years ago which says, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O*

*daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. Our story is the background to that prophecy. Here is what I wrote:*

*So, let us now consider the significance of this prophecy. To do that, let us first consider the context of Zechariah 9:9. In this chapter verses 1-7 prophecy the destruction of Israel's enemies. Now these prophecies were fulfilled by a man named Alexander the Great. In 333 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered a Persian army under Darius the III at the Battle of Issus. Alexander the Great became the 3rd world power prophesied by Daniel. The Medes and Persians, (Iranians) were the second world rulers. So after the battle of Issus, Alexander the great came down the Mediterranean coast and right there the prophecy of Zechariah 9:1-7 was fulfilled. If my calculations are correct, about 175 years after Zechariah 9:1-7 was written, it was fulfilled.*

*Well, Alexander the Great destroyed Hadrach and Damascus, cities of Syria (9:1-2a). Damascus today is the capital of Syria and still harbors a deep hatred for Israel. And of recent, Syria has been in the news a great deal. Then Alexander moved down to Tyrus and Sidon, cities of Phoenicia (9:2b-4). When the Philistines to the south of Phoenicia heard what Alexander did to the Phoenicians they were petrified. Ashkelon, Gaza and Ekron and Ashdod mentioned in verses 5-7, are cities of the Philistines.*

*Now I want you to notice a very significant verse. You see Alexander the Great has conquered around Israel and will now move inland towards Jerusalem. It is here that we read of God's protection of Jerusalem in verse 8a. Here this prophecy says, "I will camp around My house, Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns." Fred Hartman, of the magazine Israel My Glory, comments like this in his commentary on Zechariah, "Alexander, with his massive armies, had passed by Jerusalem on the way south to make war*

against the Philistine cities. He had demanded that tribute be paid, which Israel's high priest refused to do. With the Philistines on his mind, Alexander and his conquering armies bypassed Jerusalem. Once the Philistine area had been secured, the thought of taking the city returned to the general's mind. His swift-moving military machine would now go up to Jerusalem-so he thought" end quote (Zechariah: Messenger of the Messiah's Triumph, 89). But in Zechariah 9:8, 175 years before this happened, God had already said what would happen. You see, He had said, "I will camp around My house..."

So, Alexander, when he had defeated Gaza headed for Jerusalem for he was angry with the High Priest's disobedience to him regarding tribute money. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived and wrote in the time of Christ writes of this account. He tells us that when the High Priest heard Alexander was coming he was very afraid. He called on the people to pray and they offered sacrifices to God for protection against Alexander. And in a dream God spoke to the High Priest and told him to take courage and adorn the city and open the gates and that he and the priests should go to meet Alexander in their priestly garments and the rest should dress in white and thus go out and meet this army, and that they should be unafraid. Well, as Alexander neared the city the Chaldeans and Phoenicians who were with him could hardly wait to lay hands on these Jews and their plunder, for they know Alexander was very angry with the high priest.

Now I want to give you a lengthy but very interesting bit of history from Josephus. Here is what Josephus says happened as Alexander the Great neared Jerusalem, "...the very reverse happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest.

*The Jews did altogether, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about; whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind.*

*However, Parmenio alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass that, when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, 'I did not adore him, but that God who had honored him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonian, who, when I was considering myself how I might obtain dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind.'*

*And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city; and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifices to God, according to the high priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was shewed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was that person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present..." end quote (Josephus 244).*

Those are the most notable words regarding these white robes I have read besides those of Revelation 6. And what is significant here to our passage in Revelation is white robes. And where were the priests given the white robes? At the laver, not the altar. And now we

ask, and you know the answer: what does white picture in Scripture? Righteousness. In Isaiah 1:18 the Lord said, "'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, (there is the altar) They shall be as white as snow (there is the laver); Though they are red like crimson (there is the altar), They shall be as wool (there is the laver)."

Now all of this raises some very important questions. Let us consider some of them, and no doubt some of you will have pondered these.

### 3. Important questions

So, let me share with you briefly the questions that I was caused to seek to answer because of the unexpected discovery that I ran into. It seems inescapable that the history, and maybe the future significance of baptism lies in the laver in the tabernacle. I could not get away from this. Nor can others who have pondered this. And, if that is correct, it would answer some of the things I have never understood, and that you may have pondered as well. Turn to Matthew 3 as I begin to give some of the questions I have pondered:

Question # 1: If the believer is washed in the blood of Christ, which happens at the altar, why is another washing with water required at the laver? Why two washings?

Question #2: What is baptism all about?

Question #3: What was John's baptism all about? Go to Matthew 3.

Let us begin in Matthew 3:1:

*1 ¶ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,*

*2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

*3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the*

wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

4 And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him

6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

Question #4: How did they normally deal with their sins? Well, they went to the temple with a sacrifice and confessed their sins over the animal and it was slaughtered. Why this change? This was far out of the ordinary. How did the people even accept such a huge change? How did the Scribes and Pharisees accept it? What is happening? We go on in verse 7:

7 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

9 "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

10 "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Question #5: Why did the religious people come for baptism? Should the scribes and Pharisees not have been up in arms about somebody doing something so out of the ordinary? Surely we must ponder such questions. It is not that baptisms were new to Judaism. But baptism after repenting from sin without a sacrifice? What we can say is that what happened under his preaching of righteousness was that people came under tremendous

conviction of sin, and he instructed them to confess their sins and be baptized. But this is not how they dealt with sin in the OT. They had various baptisms, but when it came to sin a sacrifice was in order, and a trip to the temple. And here the priests would offer their sacrifice before the Lord.

We go on to verse 11:

*11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Question #6: What was John's baptism all about? How was it different from the baptism he said Christ would do? We see that there is a difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ. Have you wondered at what that difference is? Let me just mention the baptism of fire. I understand that to refer to hell. People will be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and if not, they will be baptized in fire in hell. It is verse 12 that leads me to that view for John says:

*12 "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn (those baptized in the Holy Spirit); but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (those baptized in fire)."*

We go on then in verse 13:

*13 ¶ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.*

Question #7: Here is our next question: Why would Jesus need to be baptized? Or was it necessary? We know it could not be because of sin. Why then was He baptized? Is it something new, and is there no need for historical explanation? We go on in verse 14:

*14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"*

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

Question #8: John felt it most inappropriate for a mere person from the wilderness to baptize the Messiah. But consider most carefully now verse 15 as I read it again:

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting... Here is our question: What was it fitting for? It was appropriate for Him to be baptized, but what was appropriate about it?

Question #8: Before I ask question number 8, let me read the verse again:

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

Now consider the word to *fulfill*. By getting baptized, He was fulfilling something. What was He fulfilling? You see, when something is fulfilled, something preceded the fulfillment. When you have a prophecy fulfilled, the prophecy precedes the fulfillment. What preceded the fulfillment here?

Question #9: Furthermore, what was righteous about getting baptized? Why should it be done? Somewhere in the past there was a righteous standard set up. And it was appropriate for Christ to fulfill that standard. And what was that standard? Such are the questions I wrestled with and the reason why I wondered if I should cover this now. But I believe, to understand Revelation 6 and the white robes, it will be most helpful to answer these questions as best we can.

Question #10: Then there are questions such as this: Mark 16:16 says, *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.* And we would most naturally understand from that, that baptism is part of salvation. What does this mean?

Question #11: On that first great sermon after the Church was born, Peter said in Acts 2:38, *Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* So, the question is, do we receive forgiveness of sins by water baptism, and do we receive the Holy Spirit because we get baptized in water?

Question #12: Turn to Acts 22:16. Paul is recounting his testimony here and what he was told by Ananias. After he was converted at Damascus he was told, *'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'* Question: Does baptism wash away sins? And if so, why the need for blood?

Question #13: Or consider Titus 3:5 which says our salvation is, and I quote, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...* The washing of regeneration, what is that all about? You see, regeneration is the new birth. Do we get this by the washing of baptism? We could add John 3, except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. What is the water?

Question #14: For this question, turn to 1 Peter which says in 3:21, *There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Does baptism save us? What is the meaning here?

Well, there is a connection between the laver and water baptism, and a connection between the white robes and the laver. And because the altar and the laver are part of the tabernacle furniture, I want to give us next, the basic stages of the tabernacle, and in doing so,

explain the use of the laver and from there, see how it relates to Revelation 6.

CONCL: Well, let me conclude this first message related to the white robes. My proposition was this: The white robes are received, not at the altar, but at the laver. I shared how we do not always get all the details in one passage, just as we didn't in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. And then we saw that not only is the altar related to the tabernacle, but the white robes are too. I pointed out the connection between the laver and baptism, and that may seem a stretch to you and you may wish to read these passages and ponder them. But that led us then to ask a lot of questions about baptism, like why did Jesus get baptized?

And with that, I began to give us some background to the tabernacle, and somewhere in the future I want to seek to answer most of those questions I asked about baptism. I do not know that I will be able to answer them all, but they will give you a lot to ponder. With regard to the tabernacle, I believe there was a time when there was no tabernacle, and that it was first pitched in heaven by God. And we will see some of the connections in other messages.