

My mother lived 94 years as a member of the church – that is the church on earth, the church militant. She now is a member of the church in heaven, the church triumphant. She is in the multitude who have **come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**. I can picture my mother [and you can picture your sainted mother, grandmother, or great grandmother] dressed in a beautiful white robe and waving a beautiful palm branch in her hand and singing in the choir with all the holy angels.

### **1. It has many members.**

Let's look at this great multitude in the glory of heaven. It has many members. <sup>9</sup>**There before me was a great multitude that no one could count.** These are the "seed of Abraham" more numerous than the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore. They come **from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb**. These words are often used in the Book of Revelation to describe the totality of the glorious Church triumphant. They come from every nation. There are over 200 nations on earth.

They come from every tribe. There are over 500 Indian tribes in the USA, and over 200 tribes in India – note those tribes are not called "Indians" in India. There they are called *Adavasis*. Both the Apaches and Navajos call themselves "people." Geronimo would not call himself an "Indian" but *NDin – Indin* – their word for people. Literally they called themselves "Us." Everyone can call himself and his people "Us." Everyone is included in the Gospel call.

Every language in the world today numbers over 7000. One billion speak Mandarin. A half billion speak Spanish. Most of those who speak one of the rare languages also speak another language such as French or English.

The point is obvious. When death transfers us from earth to heaven, the havoc of the tower of Babel is removed. The saints are made up of every kind of human being so the church on earth has a mission to **make disciples of all nations, tell the good news to all people**.

This glorious Church is the Communion of Saints and you can read more about it in the current *Forward in Christ* on page 28.

### **2. It has a glorious message.**

My mother's glorious Church has a glorious message. That choir in white robes and waving palm branches sings in great volume: <sup>10</sup>**Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb**. I prefer a very literal translation of this verse: "*The Salvation is of our God.*" And so I suggest a paraphrase to explain it: The only real Salvation comes from God. Salvation is God's plan from A to Z. Salvation is all by the grace of God. This is heaven's glorious Gospel message: <sup>14</sup>**They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**. In Isaiah 1:18, the prophet proclaimed to the Old Testament church militant that "**all our righteous acts are like filthy rags and though our sins are like scarlet they would become as white as snow.**" And again Isaiah has these Old Testament saints singing: **I delight greatly in the LORD: for he has clothed me with garments of salvation and dressed me in a robe of righteousness.** (Isaiah 61:10)

When the saints in heaven sing of this glorious message, 100 billion angels add this refrain that is “Amen” *absolutely true*: **12Amen, Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.**

### 3. It has perfect bliss.

My mother’s glorious Church exists in perfect bliss. The Book of Revelation has many ways of describing this beatific vision. Verses 15-17 describe the glory of the New Jerusalem in a 10-verse poem. If you have lost your mother or any loved one, let the vision described here bring you peace and comfort.

**15They are before the throne of God.** The LORD God Almighty, Creator, Savior, Comforter is seated on a glorious throne of gold and his victorious Church shares the splendor.

**15And they serve him day and night in his temple.** Whether we picture this as the great Temple of Solomon or the Tabernacle of Moses, they have the greatest job in the world. They are working in the perfect company for the perfect Lord and Master. The Greek word translated here as “serve” is *latraia*” from which we get the word “liturgy” which means worship and is carried into our English language as “service.” Theirs is a perfect worship service.

**15And he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.** This picture of going camping in a perfect tent describes the close living relationship they have with their God. He will care for us, protect us, provide for us. As he once **was made flesh and dwelt among us**, they are pictured as dwelling with him in glorified, immortal bodies.

**16Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.** As food and drink are the basic necessities of life on earth, during this great tribulation—during these trying times—all our needs will be supplied. This is the banquet feast of the King. It will be better than pizza!

**16The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.** No more sunburn in heaven. “Jesus the Light of the world will their sun.”

**17For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water.** This verse brings us the beautiful picture of the Good Shepherd shown to us in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Today is more than Mother’s Day; it is “Good Shepherd Sunday” and our Gospel brought us that beautiful and comforting picture of Jesus, our Good Shepherd, fulfilled in the glorious Church in heaven. Today the Good Shepherd is leading us to the springs of living water, the Gospel of salvation purchased by the blood of the Lamb. Remember Pastor Clark’s sermon last week when he explained how the Shepherd is also the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. This Good Shepherd will take us to the glorious Church where we will dwell in the House of the LORD forever. How the Shepherd can also be the Lamb is explained more fully on page 26 in the current *Forward in Christ*.

The last verse of this beatific vision sums up the description of my mother’s glorious Church. **17And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.** Doesn’t that sum it up beautifully?

We look forward to this glory – so you can sing Hymn 213, stanzas 1 & 2 from CW 93 at my funeral:

Forever with the Lord, amen, so let it be  
Life from the dead is in that word, my immortality.  
While time on earth is spent, absent from Him I roam,  
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent a day’s march nearer home. Amen.