

Revelation is a spectacular book. It's a vision the Lord gave the Apostle John while he was on the Island of Patmos. John was in exile there because he couldn't keep his mouth shut. He kept talking and talking about Jesus after he had been ordered to stop doing that.

Chapter 7, which is today's part of this amazing vision, has us standing with John in the throne room of God. We see a choir, too large to count, wearing white robes, waving palm branches and singing at the top of their lungs: **“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”**

Then all the angels chime in they are in complete agreement with the choir's message: **“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”**

This is just a tiny taste of Revelation. It is a spectacular book. It makes us say: **“Wow! What a vision!”**

These choirs, all this worship and all this praise belongs to the Lamb. He deserves all the attention because he's credited with salvation. Salvation does belong to him. But that's only part of the story. There's more. The Lamb who rescued sinners, also happens to be the Shepherd. Yes, you heard me right. See what I mean about this book!

As amazing as it sounds, it's true: **THE LAMB IS THE SHEPHERD!** That makes us pause and exclaim: **1) Wow! What a Lamb! 2) Wow! What a Shepherd!**

(1)

*“Wash your hands before you sit down at the dinner table.”* I don't know how many times I heard my mom say those words growing up. And my wife, Sandy, reminded our four boys of the same thing. Hands which have been digging in the dirt and sandbox are filthy.

We are just as dirty and just as filthy. But it's not from the sandbox, dirt piles or flowerbeds in the backyard. It's from the sins in our heart.

The dirt of our sin isn't always visible to others, and sometimes we don't even notice it. But it's there. Ever since we were conceived, we inherited a dirty heart from our parents. Sin has impacted every aspect of our lives.

Sin affects our thinking. Why do we worry? We worry because our god is too small. When we worry, who becomes our god? We do. Instead of leaving things in God's hands, we worry that we won't be able to handle this situation, or that problem. That's what sin does to our thinking.

Sin affects our speaking. Why do we find so much pleasure in hearing juicy gossip? Why are we so quick to become angry and lash out at others? Why do we try to spice up a conversation by including God's name or profanity or vulgar language? Words are powerful. That's what sin does to our speaking.

Sin affects our actions. Hidden cameras often expose what really goes on at home, or on the job, or in the classroom. Parents doing unthinkable things to their children. Employees not giving an honest day's work for an honest day's wage. Students cheating on tests. That's what sin does to our actions. The filth of sin has impacted every aspect of our lives, and we can't scrub them out.

There is something that can. It's the best cleaning agent on the planet. It's blood, the precious blood of the Lamb. In John's vision he saw people who **“washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** Normally, blood leaves a permanent stain, but in this case it permanently removes the stain of sin. John shared this in his First Epistle: **“The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.”** **Wow! What a Lamb!**

In John's vision, the Lamb is receiving praise, glory and honor for successfully completing a rescue

mission: **“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”**

The Lamb was sacrificed on Good Friday, but on Easter he rose. Salvation belongs to him because he defeated death. Yes, physical death will always be the outcome for being sinners. God made that clear to Adam and Eve: **“For dust you are and to dust you will return.”** However, death doesn't have the final word. For the believer, death is not a door to hell's fire, it's an escape hatch to heaven's glory. **Wow! What a Lamb!**

(2)

That Lamb is more than what he appears to be. John tells us: **“The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.”** Whoever heard of a lamb being a shepherd? Shepherds protect and take care of lambs.

A lamb becoming a shepherd would be a role reversal. Unusual yes, but it's not unheard of. At times, children have to take on the role of a parent when parents can no longer make decisions or take care of themselves. The Lamb, Jesus, takes on the role of the Shepherd, Jesus.

And Wow! What a Shepherd he is! Protecting and caring for us as if his life depended on it, because it did! And one day he'll eliminate every cause of sadness, because his life depended on it.

A shepherd takes care of the flock in his care by leading them to a fresh supply of water and plenty of green pasture.

Jesus, our Shepherd, provides the very best to drink: **“He will lead us to springs of living water.”** Jesus once talked to a woman about living water. *“Great,” she thought, “No more long walks to the well. No more lugging heavy water jugs back and forth.”* He had to clue her in on living water: **“Whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty. The water I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”** The water he was offering quenches our spiritual thirst for pardon, peace and purpose in life.

Jesus, our Shepherd, also provides the very best to eat: **“O taste and see that the Lord is good.”** We sing those words in one of our liturgies. The Psalmist expands on that, **“How sweet are your words to my taste. Sweeter than honey to my mouth.”** His sweet words can change lives, can give hope and a future.

Through the Sacrament of Baptism (planting faith in our hearts) and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (feeding the faith in our hearts), along with the Word of God, Jesus, our Shepherd gives us the very best to eat and drink.

There's more! Listen to this description of what we can look forward to in heaven: **“Never again will we hunger, never again will we thirst.”** No more hunger pangs or growling tummies. There's plenty to eat at his buffet. Never get thirsty again. There's plenty to drink from the springs of living water. **Wow! What a Shepherd!**

John's closing words: **“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,”** has provided countless Christians comfort over the centuries. All the sadness we've experienced in this life because of our own sins or the sins of others is gone, wiped away, never to be heard from again because sin is gone, wiped away, never to be spoken of again.

Our crying will stop and our tears will dry up on the day when the Shepherd takes us by the hand and safely leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. He can do it. He's already safely done it himself.

There, in paradise, we'll live and reign with him, as we're reminded in our prayer of the day each week. We'll also have our own white robes and palm branches so we can join the choir that sings: **“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.”** **Wow! What a Lamb! What a Shepherd!**