

## "How To Become a Saint" Revelation 7:9-17 All Saints' 2023

Are you a “saint”? You probably would hesitate to call yourself a “saint.” I’m sure you don’t write the word “saint” in front of your name when you sign things. “I’m no saint,” you probably would say. “A saint is someone like Mother Theresa – you go and live in a third world country somewhere and dedicate your life to helping others – that’s a saint. The Apostle Peter or the Apostle Paul – those guys are saints – the real good people. But me? No way. I’m not a saint.” Today, I’m here to disagree with you – according to the Bible, you ARE a saint. You see, a Lutheran has a unique approach to the word “saint.” If you are a Lutheran, then, you define the word “saint” in a different way than the rest of the confused world in which we live.

Today we are going to look at how a person becomes a “saint” in the eyes of God. Let’s say that we have a committee here at church, called the “Saint Committee.” And their job is to determine if you should be called a “saint” or not. And so, this committee goes into your house while you’re not home, and sets up hidden cameras. They set up microphones all over your house. They set up surveillance equipment at your work. They bug your phone so that they can listen to your conversations. They follow you around, take pictures of you, and take notes on everything you say and do. Then, after gathering all this information, they meet as a committee, and the chairman says, “Well, what have you learned about so-and-so? (Remember, they’re talking about you.) Is that person a saint?” What do you think they would say, after observing your life so closely? “He’s no saint,” one of them might say. “I’ve listened to his conversations. I’ve watched what he does. He’s not a saint! He’s a sinner!” Do you think that’s what the committee would say about you?

It is true, that we are sinners, and we have more than earned that title in our lives. If our all our conversations were taped, and we were watched every day, we would be embarrassed by what other people

## "How To Become a Saint" Revelation 7:9-17 All Saints' 2023

would see in our lives. And yet, this is not how a person becomes a saint. If it were, then there would be no such thing as a saint. Everyone is sinful, and even the so-called “good” people have skeletons in their closet. No one deserves to be called a saint based on the sins they have committed in their lives.

And yet, the strange thing is, God does call you a “saint”! The word “saint” appears in the Bible over 60 times, and every single time it is used, it doesn’t refer to only the special, good people. Every time, it refers to those who are Christians. Saint Paul begins his letter to the Romans with “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” If the Apostle Paul were writing this letter to you, the church today, he would write, “To all in Canada who are loved by God and called to be saints.”

So how does a person become a saint in the eyes of God? You don’t have to move to a third world country and dedicate your life to taking care of the unfortunate. That’s a fine thing if that’s what a person wants to do. But if you want to become a saint, here’s how you do. The answer is found in Scripture – in the Book of Revelation, chapter 7. There you have a picture of the saints in heaven. Verse 9 – a great multitude, wearing white robes and holding palm branches, praising God in heaven with all the angels. Verse 13 – someone asks about the saints: “These in white robes – who are they and where did they come from?”

And then verse 14 is the key verse – the secret to becoming a saint: “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” That’s how a person becomes a saint – by washing your robe and making it white in the blood of the Lamb.

## "How To Become a Saint" Revelation 7:9-17 All Saints' 2023

In the Bible, “your robe” is your life. Would you like to wash your life today, and make it white in the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Jesus Christ? Do you realize that you have already done that once today? When did you wash your life today, and make it white in the blood of the Lamb? At the beginning of our service, you confessed all your sins to God. And after confessing your sins, what happened? You received the forgiveness of sins. And it wasn't some general statement about how God is nice and loves everybody and forgives everybody. No, the forgiveness of sins you received was a special kind of forgiveness. It was forgiveness that was earned by Jesus Christ when he shed his blood on the cross. As that famous Bible passage says, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” This morning, you heard that your sins were taken away by the blood of Jesus Christ. You believed it, you put your faith in it. That's when you washed your life and made it white in the blood of the Lamb. In the eyes of God, that's when a person becomes a saint.

You see, a “saint,” as the Bible defines it, isn't one of those good people that you could never be. A “saint” is someone who realizes that he is a sinner, and then washes his robe in the blood of the Lamb. That's how you become a saint – believing that the blood of Jesus Christ takes away all your sins.

Some of you became saints when you were baptized. At that moment, God cleansed you for your sin by connecting you to the blood of his Son. An infant, baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, right before your eyes, becomes a saint when you watch that baptism on a Sunday morning.

Some of you today will be taking the Lord's Supper. For others of you, that moment isn't too far away. When you take the Lord's Supper – what are you doing? You are receiving the very body and blood of our

## "How To Become a Saint" Revelation 7:9-17 All Saints' 2023

Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of your sins. At that moment, you are washing your robe in the blood of the Lamb. And then, you turn around, and you walk back to your seat, and as you walk back to your seat, you are a “saint” in the eyes of God. It’s not because you did something so good, but because your sins have been taken away by Christ.

Every single one of you, when you get up after the service, and you shake hands and talk with people, and then, after some time, you walk to your car and drive home – as you drive home, you are a “saint” in the eyes of God. And the reason why is because in your heart, you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed you of all your sins. Every single one of you, by faith, has washed your robe in the blood of the Lamb.

There are the saints in heaven, and today, we thank God for them. We remember their example of faithfulness that they left behind for us. It’s a useful thing to recall and to talk about the saints who are in heaven, described in the Book of Revelation. But it’s also useful to remember that there are the saints on earth – those who are here today and believe in Christ right now. That’s you. And so today we also give thanks to God that he has made even us saints in his kingdom.

That’s the Lutheran approach. If someone were to ask you, “What in the world is a Lutheran?” just remember the two S’s. Do you know what the two “S’s” are? “What is a Lutheran?” someone says to you. “Well, a Lutheran is a sinner, and a Lutheran is a saint. Sinner and saint – that’s a Lutheran.” “What does that mean?” someone asks you. “Well, I’m a sinner – that’s no secret to anyone who knows me. But I’m also a ‘saint’ because Christ has taken my sins away. I’m a saint because of Jesus.” That’s what it means to be a Lutheran – at the same time, you’re a sinner, and you’re a saint - the two S’s. You believe in Christ alone,

## "How To Become a Saint" Revelation 7:9-17 All Saints' 2023

who has made this all possible. Thank God for all that he has done for us. You are a saint, my friends, and what a blessing that is. Amen.