

Series: Creation's Praise

June 1-2, 2019

Title: Creation's Praise

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Text: Revelation 5:1-14

Setting the Scene

A Sneak Peek at Heaven's Worship:

What does worship – real worship – look like? Who is present? Who leads the worship team? What songs do they sing? Wouldn't we like to know!

Thanks to a prophet named John we actually get a sneak peek at Heaven's worship. In a vision, John finds himself standing in front of a door opening up to the Throne Room of Heaven itself. When he enters, he sees:

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Revelation 4:2-3 NIV

...a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

Lightning and thunder blast from the Throne. Beneath is what looks like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. (Rev. 1:6)

Four fantastic creatures encircle the Throne – a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, each with six wings and many eyes. Together they represent God's Creation. John tells us:

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Revelation 4:8b NIV

Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is, and is to come."

And around them 24 elders fall down in worship before God and declare that He alone is worthy to receive such praise because He is the sole Creator of all things.

Here is God's Creation as it was always meant to be, and as it will one day be forever and ever!

A Scroll:

But as the scene unfolds, John discovers that God is holding a scroll sealed with seven seals in His right hand. Within this scroll are recorded the answers to the questions we humans so desperately want answered as we live in this broken and dark world. It will tell us how to live in this world and, more importantly, how God will achieve the final victory over every aspect of sin and death.

Already we have a clue as to the power and purpose of worshiping God. It is not merely an exercise to be conducted on a Sunday morning. Worship brings us into the presence of God and to the place where we discover His purpose for us and for all of His world. The scroll signifies a royal decree. The fact that it is sealed seven times guarantees its authenticity. No one else can doctor its contents.

So what does it say?

The Angel's Question:

To find out, the seals must be broken. And that can only be done by someone with the proper authority. For that reason, a mighty angel shouts out the big question:

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Revelation 5:2b NIV

"Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

Heaven and Earth alike fall silent. As John tells us:

Revelation 5:3 NIV

But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

Such is the vast gulf between Creator and the created. Only the God who made all things can fix all things. We humans, no matter how hard we try, will never crack the code and fix ourselves or our planet, much less the Universe!

Worship reminds us of who we are in God's big world. Like John, we are confronted by the reality that Creation can repair itself.

What John Saw

The worthy Lion:

John finds himself weeping uncontrollably because there is no one worthy to open the scroll and read its contents. But then one of the elders says to him:

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Revelation 5:5 NIV

"Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Heaven has a conquering King who has the right to break the seals and carry out the purposes of God in order to restore and repair God's Creation. He is none other than the long-promised Son of David, David's "Root," who has triumphed over all of God's enemies.

What earthly kings and armies could never do, God has done through His King, the Messiah, the Christ.

The slaughtered Lamb:

Instead of seeing a roaring Lion, John sees a Lamb:

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Revelation 5:6 NIV

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

The Lamb, who stands in God's place of authority and honor, takes the scroll. He alone has the authority to open the scroll and bring God's Creation to its full restoration. The slaughter of this Lamb *is the victory* that the elder announced to John. The Lamb is Jesus, who was loyal to the point of death and who rose on the third day to defeat Death once and for all.

Heaven's Praise:

John tells us that when the Lamb, Jesus, takes the scroll in His hand, the worship bursts forth in a brand new song sung by Heaven's court:

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Revelation 5:9-10 NIV

*"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."*

Tyrants like the emperor of Rome conquered by killing their enemies and selling the defeated survivors into slavery. This King conquers by being executed on a Roman cross – a cross that was meant to display His total and utter defeat. And instead of enslaving those He conquered, this King has purchased them at the price of His own blood and set them free. Rome busied itself trying to subdue the surrounding nations and tribes. King Jesus, through His death on the cross had redeemed people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" so that they can rule on the restored earth the way God always intended.

Once more, we gain a clue to what worship is really all about. John refers to the redeemed humanity as "a kingdom and priests to serve our God." Here is our highest calling: to serve as priests, leading all Creation in praise and adoration of the God who created us.

Creation's Praise

A Wide-angle View:

One last time, John tells us what he sees in Heaven's Throne Room. Millions of angels, as uncountable as the galaxies in the Universe, join their voices with Heaven's court:

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Revelation 5:11-12 NIV

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

Creation's Praise:

And then John hears a roar ascending from the totality of God's Creation:

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Revelation 5:13-14 NIV

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"*

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

A tsunami of praise has surged out from the Throne to the farthest reaches of God's world. It is praise to the Creator and to His Son, the Lamb, through Whom He has rescued the world. This is the ultimate purpose and calling of God's Creation: to give Him alone praise, honor, glory and power for ever and ever!

Worship!

When we worship, we become part of that never-ending tsunami of praise and adoration. Like tiny drops of sea water caught up in a rising swell, we become a wave of praise that explodes in joyful proclamation of God's goodness and greatness.

Worship brings us into Heaven's control room and allows us to stand in the presence of the Great King.

Worship reminds us that only Jesus, through His death on the Cross, is worthy to "open the scroll" and reveal God's purposes for restoring a lost and broken world. It's not up to us. We are to join Him in His work.

Worship reminds us that Jesus redeemed us from sin and death to make us a "kingdom and priests to serve our God." Worship is part of that serving.

Finally, worship reminds us that we are not alone. All creation is called to give God and the Lamb praise, honor, glory and power. It is our greatest calling, It is what we were made for. We will only find ourselves when we lose ourselves in the worship of God and Lamb.