

“Worthy is The Lamb”

In Revelation chapters four and five we are presented with a symbolic vision of the Lord Jesus Christ being acknowledged and honoured by both the angels and the saints before our Heavenly Father.

This incredible vision depicts the victory of the Master not only over his own flesh, but also with regards to having now brought many sons unto glory. For he, being the captain of their salvation, suffered to achieve this tremendous victory - and we are here today to remember the price that has been paid to bring this vision to reality.

Now although this vision is highly symbolic, undoubtedly the praise that the Master receives when he comes to establish his Father's kingdom will be very real. Let us not make the mistake of dismissing the power and reality of this future event, just because it is given as a symbolic vision.

We are presented then with both the Master and his saints depicted by various symbols used to explain how their redemption was accomplished. This vision is significantly given at the beginning of the unrolling of gentile history in what we could term the ecclesial age.

Thus the vision presented here was to be a source of comfort, strength and courage to the brethren and sisters of that day, in the very fact that our Lord and Master had overcome. Now all power in heaven and earth was now given unto him to execute the Father's will in the unveiling of his plan unto its fulfilment in the glorious age to come. For as we read on into Revelation and tomorrow's reading in chapter six we see the unsealing of the scroll's various seals and their effects upon the then Roman world. Indeed the age of the seals is far behind us and now nearly 2,000 year's later brethren and sisters for we are in the period of the final two vials.

Deep within the period of the sixth vial, undoubtedly approaching epoch of our beloved Lord's return brethren and sisters we too need to take comfort, strength and courage from this incredible vision as those early first century brethren did.

The vision brethren is meant to **comfort** us in that firstly we know the end from the beginning the resurrection of our Lord assured the victory, when our Heavenly Father raised him to his right hand. Secondly we see here in verse eleven the number of the saints redeemed from all ages and it is not a small limited and selective number.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” (verse 11)

“Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,” a number taken from Daniel chapter seven speaking of an incalculable number. Do we not read elsewhere *“fear not, little flock; for it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom”*.

Now please do not misunderstand me brethren and sisters I am not saying that every saint will be accepted at judgement seat not at all. Rather I am saying this incalculable number is given so that we do not make the mistake of excluding ourselves on the pretext that there is only so many spaces available and only the very best will gain a place.

Let us be honest brethren and sisters not one of us is worthy. Yet every one of us has been called and every one of us is therefore more than capable in the Father's mercy of attaining the kingdom. Yet due to our nature we tend to play down our own suitability and play up every one else's. It is what flesh does, yet this vision is here to encourage each and every one of us to believe in the current work of our Lord in him bringing those many sons to glory, even us here today.

Let us take further **comfort** in that the picture given of these saints finally in the presence of their Lord is one of great rejoicing for as we see in verse nine they are all singing. Interestingly, none of the songs referenced in the Apocalypse are solos!

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (verses 9-10)

These saints are jubilant no longer compassed about by every infirmity of the flesh whether physical or mental. Now rather they are arrayed in white - which we read elsewhere is the righteousness of the saints, our Lord's bride. More than this, we are also informed in verse four of chapter four that they have received the golden *stephanos* or victory wreath, both of these symbols speaking of the saints having overcome the flesh in the blood of the lamb and gained the victory through their tried faith.

Now this jubilation is not just because they each have individually gained age lasting life. Their individual and collective joy is because the purpose of our Heavenly Father has been advanced in Christ Jesus. Namely they now have a leadership role in the next phase of this outworking purpose in their duties as kings and priests.

Thus the motivation for their jubilation is not selfish, although they will be glad they have been redeemed, rather it is jubilation in the accomplishment and continuing work of the Father's purpose in the one they sing of, namely our Lord Jesus Christ.

Their joy looks back to that which has already been accomplished in Christ and forward to that which they will shortly take part in fulfilling the rest of that purpose centred in the one we are here to remember. Indeed this is even true of what we are here to accomplish once more and yet once less in the partaking of these emblems' brethren and sisters before our Lord shortly returns.

Now there is something truly wonderful in this vision that is not readily apparent, but by a careful reading of the passage. In chapter four we have the saints pictured praising God. Then in chapter five this praise is expanded to include the angels in verse eleven, as we have already seen. Then finally in verse thirteen we have the whole of creation joining in this great hymn of praise.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (verse 13)

What we have here is an outworking circle, like a ripple effect in a pond. Until the whole creation, which presently *“groaneth and travaileth in pain together until”* this point too is liberated from the shackles of sin and rejoices in Christ's glorious rule.

The vision then we are examining then brethren and sisters does not just take us to the beginning of the millennium, but it points forward to beyond that day, when finally our Heavenly Father is all and in all.

Yet it is true to say at the commencement of the millennium, as the earth and the nations are relieved of the bondage of sin and of their various forms of false worship they will collectively rejoice. The psalms speak of this time. See, for instance, Psalm 96:1, 7, 11 – 12.

Undoubtedly Israel guided by the saints will play a leading role, as is clear in these Psalms in teaching the nations the truth.

Returning to the scene here in Revelation 4 & 5, can you imagine yourself brethren and sisters being caught up in this great rejoicing throng gathered around the great golden ivory throne singing praise to our Father with immortal voices. No longer either afraid to hear your own voice in song or being too embarrassed to let others hear our voices in song. All that self-consciousness gone.

What will it be like to hear *“ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands”* voices singing praises to the glory of God crying *“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come”*. This cry comes from Isaiah's prophecy and in the sixth chapter we read attached to it *“the whole earth is full of his glory”*, clearly pointing forward to the ultimate fulfilment at the end of the millennium.

Now I do not know about you brethren and sisters, but once a good number of years ago now I was at a gathering in the company of over 1,000 brethren and sisters singing and then the atmosphere and the sound was tremendously uplifting and inspiring. What will it be like in this day for which we all long?

If truth be told brethren and sisters we struggle with visions like this because they are in many ways beyond our comprehension of what it will feel like to with one voice, as is clear from the Greek in **verse 11** to praise our God so. Yet we are exhorted to try and do this even now brethren and sisters in anticipation of this future event.

Romans 15: 5-7

*“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may **with one mind and one mouth glorify God**, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God”.*

Such should be our desire even now brethren and sisters for in this vision we see the Lord Jesus Christ’s redeemed bride united not just uniform in worship.

We see also in this vision that the worship of the saints was not just confined to “*offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, with, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name*”. For in addition to the prayers of the saints it speaks in verse ten of chapter four of the saints prostrating themselves before God and casting their crowns at his feet in a sign of submission, homage and obeisance.

“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne” (Chapter 4:10)

Indeed a further twice in chapter five at verses 8 & 14 do we find the saints so prostrate before the Lord Jesus Christ, as the manifestation of his Father in the earth. What is really interesting about these physical acts of worship that are totally foreign to our current experience brethren and sisters. Now please note this that each time they prostrate them selves it is as the result of a truth expounded?

Indeed the expressions of joy in song that we have already in part considered is also part of this physical and emotional response to the truth. Conversely we see the same thing at the opposite end of the scale being manifested by the Apostle John in verse four, where we read John “*wept much*”. He wept because there was no one to unseal the scroll that scroll that was bound up in Daniel’s day.

In many ways John’s response here is symbolic of our current situation in that this vision has not yet come to pass in the earth. What we are seeing here then is a physical and emotional response to the truth evident in these acts of worship.

This reinforces the fact that our life in the truth is not just to be an intellectual activity, although it is truly an important part of our life in the truth, because the word of God is the key. So we indeed do need our intellect to worship and serve our Heavenly Father acceptably.

Yet at the same time we have highlighted for us a problem here with regards to our worship in that it has been said, “*the journey from the human head to heart with regards to worship is the longest journey ever travelled in this life*”. The truth needs a physical and emotional response brethren and sisters, our whole being is required.

So in chapter four they prostrate themselves as a result of proclaiming those words in verse eight “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*”. The truth of the holiness of our God brethren and sisters should drive us to such a realisation of our position before him, as flesh and blood creatures of the dust.

Then in verse eight of chapter five we find the bride once more prostrating themselves before their Lord, as a result of him being worthy to take the book. “*And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb*”.

Finally in verse fourteen, as a result of the praise of the whole creation and their own collective pronouncement of “*Amen*” at the end of that praise endorsing it, the saints again joyfully prostrate themselves in submission, homage and obeisance.

From these three applications depicting how the saints will worship in the age to come we learn that part of our worship in giving honour to our Heavenly Father is to be with our whole being. Not just with either the heart or the mind. That being the case brethren and sisters we need to learn to actively practice such worship now. And not just go through the motions, which in honesty we are prone to do. Because in many ways even this simple ritual of weekly partaking of the emblems can and does become mundane due to the weakness of the flesh.

Again if truth were told brethren and sisters, usually the only time we will prostrate ourselves in this way is as the result of our sin and our desire to confess and resume fellowship with our God. Yet here each of these incidents, are joyful events. Let us learn to prostrate ourselves in response to Yahweh’s blessings as well as his mercies brethren and sisters. Indeed let us learn to truly rejoice in Yahweh our God brethren and sisters.

Interestingly these three occasions of submission, homage and obeisance also teach us something else with regards to our salvation in Christ. Firstly it all comes from our Heavenly Father; He initiated it, provided for it and brought it into being. Secondly He worked out his plan through our Lord Jesus Christ our beloved Master, again separate from us. So that finally our only suitable response is to worship him with thanksgiving and honour for what He has achieved in Christ.

Let us realise brethren and sisters that we bring nothing to the table, except **our response** in a thoughtful and heartfelt life of active worship, service and sacrificial work. (**All three aspects are part of and complete our worship**).

In Romans Chapter 12 and at verse 1 we read:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (or worship).

Worship is actually one of our Heavenly Father’s gifts to us, so that we might learn to place worth where it truly belongs and to deepen our love for our God. Our Heavenly Father brethren and sisters does not need our worship for He does not lack anything in himself nor is He enhanced by it. Rather it is a means of developing and enhancing us both individually and collectively as we learn to practice worship through praise, service and sacrifice.

Yet nonetheless he commands us and implores us to worship him, because in such actions as depicted here in this wonderful vision we are truly fulfilled and satisfied. We may ask the question then - *does our Heavenly Father get anything at all from all our worship?*

The answer is if that worship is based upon truth and sincere then yes, He chooses to derive pleasure from it. Yet let us be warned brethren and sisters Israel were constantly castigated for what was lacking in their worship. *Can it be said of you and I brethren and sisters that we each have the balance right with regards to our worship?*

With these thoughts in mind we return then in verse nine to find these redeemed saints acknowledging these truths, where we read. “*Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*”.

The focus of the saint’s worship is on the **worthiness** of the Master. In fact our word “*worship*” is actually a contraction from the old English word “*worthship*”, meaning “*to love, to admire & adore*” in other words to be worthy in ones eyes. This is borne out in the Greek for the word “*worthy*” here means “*to have weight*”. The idea is that of having **standing/ impact/ importance** with the one who regards the other as truly worthy.

Can it be said of you and I brethren and sisters that we each are giving the Lord Jesus Christ and indeed our Heavenly Father the right weight in our lives?

Colossians Chapter one, vs 12 – 19

Even now brethren and sisters in this simple act of remembrance our beloved Master has the **pre-eminence**, as we “*show the Lord’s death till he come*”. **Please note** that this word “*pre-eminence*” is a present active participle, meaning it is to be a principle of our daily lives to place the Lord Jesus Christ **first** in our lives. Let us note the thought of the Eternal Spirit here is in the present tense, so that even now are we to live this way, as new creatures, because in the following verses we are given two reasons for this need. Firstly in verse nineteen we read “*for it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell*”.

Secondly if we are each to be and collectively reconciled by his blood that we might be presented in that day “*holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight*” (verse 22). Failure to put the Master first in our lives manifests that we are yet carnal in our thinking and actions.

Note carefully brethren and sisters, the Master’s worthiness is as a direct result of what our Heavenly Father achieved through his life, death and resurrection. Worthiness comes then from what has been done. Indeed this very principle is the basis of our own forthcoming judgement, is it not.

In 2nd Corinthians Chapter 5 and at verse 10 we read:

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; **that every one may receive the things done in his body**, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”.*

Returning to Revelation chapter five and in verses nine and ten we are given four reasons (*number of God manifestation*) for the Masters worthiness.

1. He “*was slain*” is an obvious reference to the atoning work of Christ we shall shortly remember. This looks back at the **past** historic event.
2. He has, “*hast redeemed (or purchased) us to God,*” which speaks of the efficacy of Christ’s atoning work and describes both its **past, present** and **ongoing** effect. **Note** brethren and sisters that the use of the aorist tense here for the word “*redeemed*” points not only to our redemption as an accomplished fact. But also that there is therefore a present effect every time we actively apply our faith in Christ.
3. He has “*made us unto our God a kingdom of priests*” points to the future work of the saints, which is a reality at this point in the vision.

And “*we shall reign*” - the Greek employs a **future** indicative of a promised future fact.

This incredible vision brethren and sisters should embolden and encourage us to place our faith in our Heavenly Father’s provision in Christ Jesus our Lord. The vision was given to assure all believers down from the first century to our present generation “*that he, which, hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*”.

Thus the vision should indeed **inspire** us brethren and sisters to “*press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*”. In this quotation concerning stretching towards the prize of our high calling we learn a fascinating point. Endorsed here by the scriptures and backed up by years of psychological research that “*it is not the past, but the future that conditions you*”. Because what you commit yourself too determines what you are and become. The Eternal spirit through the Apostle Paul here is encouraging us to reach for the prize and here in Revelation five this vision of the future is given to inspire us to have a future orientation.

2nd Corinthians Chapter four and verse 18:

“While we look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things, which are not seen: for the things, which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”.

Now please humour me brethren and sisters close your eyes and see the scene, picture each aspect in your mind. Run your eye of faith over the great multitude of the saints and angels

given here. Praising in unison the Father through the Son, as I read to you verses eleven and twelve.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (verses 11-12).

Now comes an important question highly relevant to this idea of the vision providing for us future orientation. When you pictured in your mind the scene portrayed here did you see yourself personally and the brethren and sisters you are assembled with today in among this great throng of the redeemed?

We have to be able to see ourselves present in the kingdom brethren and sisters, because such clarity of vision is a great aid to providing the will and desire to press forward faithfully in Christ. It is not presumption on our part to see into the future in this manner. Rather **it is an act of faith on our part**, recognising that, yes we must still be found acceptable at the return of our beloved Master. The scripture provides us with these visions so that we might be up built and lifted up above the temporal.

Consider the Master the one we are to shortly remember in the emblems of bread and wine upon the table. What do we read concerning him in Hebrews *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the stake, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”*?

Now that phrase *“set before him”* means that the joy envisaged was *“placed before his eyes, it was set in front of him and it was appointed to him”*. Fascinatingly in the Greek this word *“before”* is in the present tense and is in the **middle voice** indicating to us a deliberate **personal choice**. And finally this setting of joy before Christ was a participle, in other words **a daily principle** our Master lived by. Now wonder we are exhorted there in Hebrews to keep our eyes constantly fixed upon our Lord Jesus Christ *“who is the author and finisher of our faith”*.

The Master himself envisaged the kingdom in all its aspects with the redeemed his bride. How else was he able to so overcome that we too might be brought unto glory. Surely none of us are going to charge him with presumption are we brethren and sisters?

Now wonderfully that word *“before”* we have just examined in relation to Christ is only used twice more in this form in the Greek and both passages are also in Hebrews and are highly instructive to us in this context.

Hebrews Chapter 12 and verse 1

*“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is **set before us**”.*

We find then the same exhortation we have been pursuing to lay aside the past and our sin and revel in this future orientation of the kingdom. This vision in Revelation chapter five providing us with just such a great cloud of witnesses we are to surrounded ourselves with. **Please note** brethren and sisters that it requires a personal choice on our part to set the vision before us. Indeed the word *“compassed”* here is in exactly the same form in the Greek, as the word *“before”*, indicating to us that we must make the same daily choice to be personally surrounded by these witnesses.

The question comes to us all brethren and sisters are we willing to make that choice and so surround ourselves with these things of eternity?

The final passage in which we have this idea of having something *“set before us”* is **Hebrews Chapter six and verses 17 – 20:**

*“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope **set before us**: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”.*

Now as we finally come to break bread and to drink wine in memory of our Lord until he comes to make this wonderful vision a reality in our lives. We see in the bread brethren and sisters our forerunner the Master the word made flesh. This bread which speaks to us of the power of the word of life to enlighten our minds and set before us and fill our thinking with that joy of these visions of the age to come. That we might be comforted encouraged and inspired to see their fulfilment.

Likewise in the wine we see the Master the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Who was slain to redeem us to the Father for the purpose of being his willing servants in the day of our beloved Master’s power?

Thus in the wine we see not only the price that was paid, but more importantly the choices that he made and his faithful worship of his Father in a life of praise, service and sacrifice, even to the laying down of his life. What of us brethren and sisters are we equally willing to make these same personal choices and to give our lives in worship, service and as living sacrifices for one another. So that we might one with one voice worship the Father throughout the ages of eternity, as depicted here in this tremendous vision?

We could finish brethren and sisters with no better words than the final words, recorded in this wonderful vision:

*“Saying with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever”.* (Verses 12-14).

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