



river west church

Why We Worship God

Revelation 4 (part 2)

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The Songs of Heaven

There is a lot of singing in the Book of Revelation. There's a lot of worship going on. In fact, worship is a key to the structure of the whole book. As you read Revelation, notice that you never go too far in the unfolding text before you run into another episode of praise; proclaiming the awesomeness of God in His sovereignty and salvation (4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 19:1-7). This is all by design. Worship is woven into the very fabric of Revelation. No matter what is going on in the world, no matter how crazy it gets, the worship of God is undiminished.

There is a powerful message for us in this. The "songs of heaven" are in the Book of Revelation not just to show us what heaven is like, but to show us how to live our lives in true faith right here and now. As we read, we are called to join in. We are called to become worshippers of God, full-out, one hundred percent, nothing held back. Not just singing songs, but also living our lives in faith for the glory of God.

This is crucial, because, as we shall see in Revelation, God is not the only object of worship in our world. The dragon, the beast, the image of the beast and idols of silver and gold all become the focus of worship in Revelation (9:20; 13:4; 13:8; 14:9-11; 16:20). So now we see the bigger picture. Worship is actually the defining issue in Revelation. Worship is warfare in Revelation. Everybody is a worshipper in Revelation. But who or what is being worshipped, and why?

As we study the Book of Revelation, we will find that there are two dominant themes in true worship: God as creator and God as redeemer. These are the great themes of true worship. God as creator is the theme of worship in Revelation chapter 4. God as redeemer is the theme of worship in Revelation 5. Remember, we must always hold the message of these two chapters together if we are to truly see the glory of God and understand the power of the Gospel.

Yes, God IS at the Center

John was caught up to heaven and there he saw a throne and the one who sat upon it (4:1-2). The Lord God Almighty is at the center of everything. His throne is surrounded by the 24 elders, and the four "living creatures," and a sea like crystal extending from it. All of this is designed to send the powerful message: God is the sovereign ruler of all things. Yes, God really IS at the center of everything in the universe.

It is in worship that we personally enter into the power of this truth. In worship we say "yes" to the true reality of God. In worship we "see" and we "say" the truth about God. He is the almighty, eternal, unchanging, sovereign creator. There is none like Him. That is why they sing "holy, holy, holy." It's why we sing too. Worship is an act of faith in which we reaffirm the truth about God in a world that has rejected (or reduced) the truth about God.

Scientific naturalism finds no place for God in our universe. With no one left on the throne, the universe itself becomes the ultimate reality. Then we worship the creation rather than the creator. Postmodern perspectivalism leaves no place for anything other than personal, limited, points of view. This puts individuals on their own pathetic little throne with the individual self becoming the ultimate reality. This is the world we live in, a world that seems to have no center beyond individual experience, individual perspective, individual rights.

In worship we say NO to all of this by saying YES to the ultimate reality of God. The personal, powerful, intelligent, wise, eternal, creator of all things. He is on the throne. He has a purpose and a plan. He is at

work in our lives and in our world. He is the CENTER of our lives and our world. In worship we look past the creation to the creator. In worship we resist the culture of narcissism that is emerging all around us. We actually “get over ourselves,” and as we do, we finally find our true selves in God

Yes, We WILL Worship God

Worship is a choice. In worship we choose to resist the voices that reduce, deny, or replace the reality of God. In worship we give ourselves completely to God – we joyfully surrender (they cast down their own crowns – 4:10). In worship we SEE the throne of God at the center of everything and we SAY that it is so. We say it joyfully, boldly, in faith, and in hope.

Take note: in Revelation, worship takes place in community. 24 elders, 4 living creatures, many angels, myriads of thousands and thousands (see 5:8-14). In Revelation it’s not just about finding your private personal spot to talk to God. It’s also about the gathered people of God lifting their praise together in worship to God. It’s about a group that gathers together to resist the lies that reduce or replace God. They do this by making the choice to worship God. And yes, we WILL worship God – in Jesus name, amen!