

Think about a typical “worship service” at your church. At the church I attend, for example, we start with a couple of hymns, followed by a prayer, Scripture reading, a sermon, and a responsive hymn. While we Christians may be tempted to think of the worship service as an invitation for God to be among us, worship is the act of submission, attributing honor and homage to our God. That is what characterizes true worship of the true and living God.

What if we worshipped in the same manner as the worshipers in the book of Revelation? We usually think of Revelation as a book about the Tribulation, the Antichrist, and end times. If we consider it to be solely a futuristic book, we miss out on the great theme of worship that perfumes its pages. Revelation teaches us who worships God, what characterizes their worship of God, and why God is worthy of our worship.

WHO WORSHIPS GOD

In Revelation, worship starts in chapter 1 and continues through the end of the book. When John is confronted with a vision of Jesus glorified, he falls at Jesus’ feet to worship. In the visions that follow, Jesus is worshiped by the twenty-four elders and the four beasts in chapter 4, and angels in chapter 5. Those who have been saved by Him from every kindred (“tribe”), tongue, people, and nation praise Him in chapter 7. John himself is told to worship God (19:10; 22:9). All His servants are told to praise Him (19:5). Praise is a part of worship.

Equally significant, the dragon and the two beasts set up a false religious system so they will be worshiped rather than God (chapter 13). Satan mimics the Trinity of the Godhead and the miracles of God to mislead people. Even when unbelievers see the plagues brought against them, they curse God and beg for mountains to fall on them (6:16). Wanting to control their own destinies having been made to worship, they choose to worship the dragon, along with peace and prosperity. The dragon and two beasts also conspire to kill those who glorify the one true God.

WHAT CHARACTERIZES WORSHIP OF GOD

The praise of God that echoes through the book of Revelation centers around the attributes of God and what He has done. In the first doxology (4:8), the four beasts extol His

dox·ol·o·gy | \ däk-\sä-lə-jē: a liturgical expression of praise to God

holiness. Immediately following this, the twenty-four elders worship God as worthy to receive glory, honor, and power based on His act of creation (4:11). All eyes are on God as His throne room fills with songs of adoration for ransoming His people with His blood, His many amazing acts, and even His righteous judgments upon evil men (15:3, 4).

The final doxology (19:6–8) reveals the rejoicing of God’s people over Christ’s return to earth. The long-awaited Marriage Supper of the Lamb to His Bride causes celebration. Hymn writer Matthew Bridges reminds us of this moment of triumphal entrance with the royal acclamation, “Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the throne. Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own!”

This coronation follows the pronouncement that God will dwell with His people and will wipe away every tear from their eyes (21:3, 4). For those whose names are written in the Book of Life, this pronouncement echoes many of John’s references to abiding in Christ. While Revelation does not supply many details of this heavenly existence, it will be a nonstop dwelling in God’s presence.

The only song in Revelation attributed to the unregenerate is the song of woe over Babylon’s fall (18:1–24). God will grant the wish of those who have chosen to live apart from Him by condemning them to eternal separation from Him (20:15). As C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Great Divorce*, “There are only two kinds of people: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘All right, then, have it your way.’”

Unending praise for God by His people and the heavenly creatures characterizes the worship of God, because God is entirely worthy of our worship.

WHY GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP

Revelation highlights many reasons that God is worthy of our adoration. These all emanate from His holiness (4:8). God’s holiness aligns with His character and contrasts our sinfulness. God’s holiness may be described as His perfection, including His perfect will. For people to conform to God’s holiness means living submitted and pleasing to Him on all levels.

wor·ship | \ 'wər-shəp: to honor or show
reverence for as a divine being

praise | \ 'prāz: to glorify, especially by
the attribution of perfections

The triune God is “holy, holy, holy” and eternal (4:8). His holiness and righteousness will be validated at last as a result of the revelation of His righteous acts. In complete justice, God will reward His followers and punish those who rebel against Him (11:16–18).

As Creator of the universe, God is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power. Salvation, glory, honor, and power belong to Him (19:1). Power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing belong to Him (5:12). While Christ’s initial appearance to John causes John to fall down before Him, Christ’s second appearance to John, at the close of the book, reminds us that Jesus is the rightful heir of the throne of David. Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As God and creator of the world, He has eminent domain over it and is worthy to reign.

OUR RESPONSE

In the book of Revelation, worship of God is continuous, right, deserved, full of praise, sincere, glorious, vibrant, universal, and poetic. As followers of Jesus endured persecution, hymns of praise served as models for them as they reflected on the God Who saved them.

What if we all read the book of Revelation this month to discover all the doxologies it contains? What if we took time throughout the day to reflect on the majesty and glory of God? The use of the word “behold” in Revelation should give us pause to think and reflect upon Him. He should be constantly in our thoughts as we look forward to spending eternity in His presence. ■

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