
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 5: 8-14: "The Lamb"

General idea: Imagine the countless people and entities praising Christ as Lord, billions upon billions singing His praise as a unified, mighty chorus! The entirety of all things in heaven and earth in the millions times billions will eventually worship the Lamb as Sovereign Lord over all. There is no pride, person, or thing that can stand in His way! Jesus takes charge; He becomes the Lion and the Lamb to do what no one else was willing or able to do, pay our debt of sin and reconcile us to God in harmony and in relationship. Where sin had separated us, His sacrifice paid the debt that could not be paid or fulfilled by anything or anyone else. So, Jesus takes the scroll from God the Father, and in front of all the elders and witnesses, angels and such could do nothing but fall face down, prostrate to worship Him for who He is and what He is doing. This is a reflection of what we must do to worship Christ for who He is and what He has done for us; we must do it purely and purposefully, and not wait until it is too late and we are left to worship Him out of compulsion. For when that happens, it will be too late for our redemption! He is calling out to us to receive His grace and to recognize His sacrifice, for He is, indeed, worthy to pay our debt. The call here is to disallow our pride to blind us of His worthiness.

Vs. 8-11: This passage gives us the essential Christian message of God's redemption, as our sinful nature is exchanged for eternal life in Him. It is about how our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. As we acknowledge what He has done, what are we doing with His eminence and significance in our daily life? Are we bowing down, living a life worthy of what He modeled for us? His plan and promise has been accomplished; are we accomplishing in our lives what we need to in order to line up to worship Him? He accomplished God's purpose for us when we did not deserve it. Will we lead a life of glorifying Him, which He does deserve?

- *Fell down before the Lamb* is a sign of reverence and prostration, as one would bow before gods and kings in ancient cultures. It is honoring someone with our sincere praise. We honor Christ with worship—our heartfelt, deep gratitude for who He is and what He has done for us (Gen. 17:3; 2 Chron. 7:3; Mark 3:11).
- *Harp*, a small bowed stringed instrument used in Jewish worship (not to be confused with the large, modern European harps from the 12th century), was considered the most beautiful musical instrument at the time, and is presented here as an image of something used to praise God with sincerity and reverence (1 Chron. 25:1-6; 2 Chron. 5:12; 29:25; Neh. 12:27; 1 Sam. 10:5; Psalm 33:2).

- *Golden bowls full of incense.* Incense was burned in a flat, shallow cup for worship. Here, it refers to a common, ancient metaphor for *prayers that are pleasing*. This is a Jewish image of the Temple and one of our worship for eternity in His *Kingdom Come*. This is also a call for us to be fragrant and poured out to our Lord, for that is what pleases Him. (Deut 33:10; Psalm 141:1-3; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:1-14; Rev. 8:3-4).
- Some misguided Christians have mistaken this passage as a strategy to pray to the saints and then have the saints pray to God on our behalf. This is not biblical. We go directly to God. There is no “middleman” when we are in Christ. Our prayers are to the Father, through the Son, and through the leading of the Spirit (Matt 28:18; John 1:1-3; 14:6; 16:23-27; Philip. 2:5-6; 1 Tim. 2:5).
- *Sang a new song* means being inspired by the Spirit and/or to be spontaneous in worshipping Christ. It is an image of real music used as an offering to express our deliverance or blessing. Here, it denotes the opposite of something “canned,” or obligatory. In our planning of worship, we must allow the Spirit to direct us. It is OK to compose, plan, and rehearse our praise and music, but we should not allow our worship to be a performance or a show of personalities. Rather, we are called to be an offering of praise to the main and only audience, who is Christ our Lord (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev.14:3).
- *To take the scroll* means to receive it. Christ takes it for action and He unseals and unfolds its contents of redemption and judgment in the coming chapters.
- *Your blood you purchased men for God.* This passage contains the essential, Christian salvation message. This is an image of how Israel was redeemed out of Egypt and led into the Promised Land. It was the blood of the Passover lamb that protected them; now, Christ is the ultimate depiction and application of this—Jesus Saves (Mark 10:45; 1 Cor. 6:20)!
- *Every tribe and language.* Our allegiance is to Christ by His sacrifice, not to a political power or a people group. We can be patriots to our nation as long as Christ and His Kingdom come first in our mindsets (as the American Founding Fathers demonstrated). When we are in Christ, we are part of a greater Kingdom than one of race or nationality.
- *Made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God* refers to how Priests were to be bridges from God to man in the Old Testament. Now, through Christ, there is no division or caste. We have direct, intimate access to Him. All of God’s people are holy to Him, and in the future, each of us will reign with Him (Rev. 1:6; 2:26-27; 20:4, 6; 22:5)!

This is a picture of worship, as a congregation gathers to collectively praise and honor Christ and offer themselves to Him in sacrifice. John is actually calling his people, who are in dire straits, to forget their current struggles and picture themselves in a heavenly choir—worshiping Christ, surrounded by angels and breathtaking music, and receiving their reward and His love for their faithfulness. For the early church in persecution that was meeting in secret, fearing for their lives, this message came as a great comfort and reassurance that “doing” church and being a Christian community is meaningful, relevant, and important both for now and for eternity. The chorus we will be a part of in Him will be far greater than the “noise” we hear from our enemies and persecutors.

Vs. 12-14: This passage is also a picture of our faithfulness reaching to God’s awareness. The incense He desires is the love and trust we give to Him and to one another, and our obedience as we remain in Him. Our authenticity and closeness to Christ is what touches and resounds into eternity. These are the lyrics of the angel’s songs of what Christ has done and how we are responding.

- *Voice of many angels* is the representation of a heavenly choir worshiping our Redeemer and Savior as God’s great plan has been fulfilled and has succeeded (Gal. 3:13).
- *Numbering thousands upon thousands* means indefinitely and countless. Those are not actual numbers, because “ten thousand” was the largest single number in the Greek then, but is a rhetorical phrase for “beyond counting.” Frequently, ancient songs would exaggerate numbers in battle such as the song of David killing “tens of thousands,” but here, it is no exaggeration (1 Sam. 18:7-8; Dan. 7:10; Heb. 12:22).
- *They sang.* What starts in Heaven resounds through the entire universe, and that is the worship of Christ. This is not about style or ethnicity of worship; rather it is about how we are diverse, yet one in Him by our celebration of Christ.
- *Worthy is the Lamb* is a picture of all peoples saved in Him, celebrating their redemption. All peoples, tongues, and locations are unified in Christ (Gen. 22; Ex. 12:3; Isa. 53:8; John 1:29; 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:9).
- *Receive power*, as in praising the Lord, everlasting to everlasting (1 Chron. 29:10-19; Rev. 7:12).
- *Every creature in heaven and on earth.* This infers that eventually, in the end times, all will submit to God. This is also an image of God’s sovereignty and how all things in the universe are submitted to Him now. He allows our pride and free will to lead us into thinking we are submitted to no one, and in refusing His election and grace, we judge ourselves in our defiance to His

authority and love (Isaiah 45:23; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:10; Col. 2:3).

- *Said, "Amen."* Nothing can thwart God's will and purpose. Satan thinks he can, and our pride makes us think we can, but God is totally sovereign. Our control is merely an illusion and a delusion to ourselves and others that He puts up with so we can eventually learn to surrender to Him and be trusting and obedient to Him (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; Isa. 60:1-5; Rev. 7:9-17; 10:11; 12:5; 13:7; 14:6-8; 15:4; 17:15; 18:3; 19:15; 20:3; 21:24-27).

Did you notice that in the context of this passage, starting in chapter four, the praise for Christ grows and grows until it encompasses all that exists in the universe? Worship is what the Christian life is about. It is our goal, purpose, and call. It is where we start and finish and what we do in eternity. Heaven is a place of worship and our church is a mere shadow of this—a rehearsal that pales in comparison. Worship is our heart pouring out to His. True worship of Christ by our submission to Him with earnestness, sincerity, and serenity helps create our character and maturity, and prepares us for life both now and for eternity. It lines us up to Christ and away from our sin and agendas. We must allow our pride to yield to the necessity of being accountable to one another. The more mature people in the Lord must model and disciple the immature. All of us are equal in the Lord; however, we must never allow our maturity and growth to be a source of pride or use it to put others down! Remember, others have their eyes on us. If we stumble, others will, too. If we succeed, others will, too!

Preterist view sees this passage as a start to the sentence of judgment as we will see in the following chapters. The Lamb invokes an outburst of extreme worship and introduces a new song to God's praise and worth for our redemption. His old song refers to creation. The *prayers* refer to Christians pleading with God for relief in their persecutions, and their deliverance is made by destroying Jerusalem (I do not see how that spells r-e-l-i-e-f, or helps us now or in the future). They see the *kingdom of priests* as being the priests of Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 and replaced by the Church in Hebrews 7-8. The *new song* is a response by the angels, counted in the millions, giving a doxology for God's glory, for He is worthy. Then, the worship climaxes when the elders fall prostrate and say *Amen*.

Futurist view: sees this passage as the beginning of the end of the present age and the start of the new age and the coming of Christ. *Prayer of the saints* refers to "thy Kingdom be done" and the fulfillment of God's will. The *reign* on earth is seen as the millennial Kingdom as the Christians will rule the earth with Christ. The worship of Christ by *countless angels* as in Psalm 19 and 68 indicates *power/strength* and is seen as His Second Coming. They see *every knee* as referring to angels and/or to animals, because they believe the Church will be "raptured" prior to this (even though there is no biblical support for this theory, no matter how personally appealing it is, or how hopeful I am for it!). It also ignores many other scriptures.

Idealist view: They see this passage as the fulfillment of Daniel 7:9-14, where the “Ancient of Days” is to have dominion. The *incense* means prayers, and the *new song* is the response of God to them. Also, it means the New Covenant of the God of our redemption. The *reign* on earth is seen as the royal priesthood of all believers. They see the worship of Christ by *countless angels* as mainly metaphoric because their scope of reason cannot contort enough to see that all of creation can do that, thus not taking into account the omnipotence and omnipresence of God. They do bring up a valid point that in the following passages, mankind is still cursing God and being judged. However, this vision is not limited to a time sequence or chronology. Since God lives outside of space and time, it is rather a prediction of what will eventually happen.

Historicist view: sees this passage as God being benevolent and merciful as our Redeemer and the universe rejoicing in profound adoration because of this. God’s providence depicts that Jesus is the only One who is worthy to save. The *reign* on earth is seen as the ascendancy of Christianity to the world in its influence and scope. Some argue that all earthy rulers will be Christians before the Second Coming, although this is a big stretch. Others say this is referring to the “a millennial” spiritual reign of Christians in our present time as we will no longer be slaves to sin.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What is your favorite worship song or hymn and why? How does this song help you focus on worshiping Christ? Why are music and song important in your church?
2. What does it mean to your daily Christian life that Christ’s eternal power, authority, strength, and the completeness (the life He gave us) empowers us to live a life that is worthy? What would a worthy, spirit-filled, and empowered

life be like for you?

3. Music is important, but do you know it is only a way to worship, not the way? How can music and our ideas of worship be distracting to our genuine, pleasing worship of Christ?
4. What is the sign of reverence and prostration that Christ asks of us? What must we do to worship Christ effectively and earnestly?
5. How does it make you feel or what hope does it give you that the entirety of all things in heaven and earth will eventually worship the Christ? Can you explain the difference between worshipping Christ out of reverence and “worshipping” Him out of compulsion?
6. How is Christ worthy and in charge? How is He in charge of you? What can you do to increase your trust and feel more secure in Christ? Consider what He has done for you!
7. How can the true worship of Christ by your submission to Him with earnest sincerity and serenity helps create character and maturity in you and prepare you for life now and for eternity?
8. What does it mean to your faith that His plan and promise has been accomplished? Are you carrying out your life so you are lined up to worship Him? How so?
9. How would you describe sincere praise? From your perspective, what pleases Him? How can you be more of a fragrant offering and poured out to our Lord?
10. What are you doing with His eminence and significance in your daily life? Are you bowing down, living a life worthily as He modeled for you? How so? What prevents this from happening more?
11. What does it mean to put Him first in all that we do in life? How do we maneuver our Church to be under His rule and kingship, rather than our committees and trends?
12. How would you describe *spontaneous* and *just worshipping* Christ? What can you do to prevent your church’s worship from becoming a performance for themselves, for the members, or for a show of personalities? What can be done to do as we are called, that is, to be offerings of praise to the main and only audience—Christ our Lord?