

Praise in Heaven

Revelation 19:1-10

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



One of the things that we have seen in the book of Revelation is that the worthiness of the Lamb means that he deserves right or authentic worship. Pastor John Piper offers a helpful explanation of just what authentic worship is, he writes. “We worship God authentically when we know him truly and treasure him duly. Then the word “worship” refers to that valuing, that inner valuing, becoming visible in the world in two basic ways in the New Testament. One is acts of the mouth: acts of praise and repentance in worship services or small group gatherings. The other is acts of love with the body and the hands and the feet: acts of love that show the supreme value of God by what we are willing to sacrifice for the good of others. “True worship is based on a right understanding of God’s nature, and it is a right valuing of God’s worth.” I get those two things from Hebrews 13:15–16. Listen to this amazing summary. It says, “Through him, then,” — through Christ — “let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Those two verses begin and end with the term “sacrifice.” Of course, the sacrifice is an echo from the Old Testament sacrifices, which were at the center of the worship and were to display the value of God as we gave up a bull or a goat and showed that God is precious to us. We value his redemption that comes to us through the sacrifice and now through the sacrifice of Christ. So through Christ, two things become worshipful sacrifices in our life: the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name, that is, worship services in singing and praying and repenting and confessing, and secondly, the fruit of deeds. Don’t neglect to do good. Share what you have. Such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Both of those are acts of worship.”¹

What we hear in John Piper’s encouragement here is that we are wired for two things, worship and participate in and give God glory. Revelation is clear, God’s glory is not dependent on my acknowledging it to be valid in any way. It is simply because that is who God is. And, every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. The grace that God extends to us is that we get to participate in his glory now and forever by surrendering our lives to Jesus. God makes a way for us to be restored to live the life we were meant to live. That reality does not wait but begins the moment we trust Jesus as savior. In other words, we begin living as new people now, called to faithfulness, and **faithful people worship God with their lives.**

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-worship>

1. What is worship?

- a. Revelation is very much a book that is focused on right worship.
 - i. As we have gone through it, we have had repeated visions of the worship in heaven in response to God's faithfulness.
 - ii. Don't forget – Revelation, as apocalyptic literature, offers a heavenly explanation of an earthly reality.
- b. **Worship is in its most basic sense to ascribe praise to something.**
 - i. You can worship anything – That doesn't make it right, healthy, or appropriate worship.
 - ii. **v.10a** - John prostrated himself to *worship* the speaker. This means that he thought him divine (there are one or two places in the Old Testament where men prostrate themselves before angels, as Num. 22:31, 1 Chr. 21:16; but these refer to homage, not worship). **There is no place in Christianity for the worship of any but God.** John is immediately checked with 'See not' (*hora mē*), where the abruptness lends emphasis to the prohibition. It is clear that some early Christians were tempted to worship angels (Col. 2:18). This passage rebukes and discourages the practice. **The angel links himself with John by calling himself a fellow servant with you.** ²
 - iii. Repeated – Hallelujah!
 - 1. **"Hallelujah," meaning, "praise Yahweh," is drawn from the Hallel Psalms, Psalms 113–18, and its use as a title for several others (Pss 106, 111, 135, 146–50). This word had a special place in the cultic life of Israel, expressing jubilant joy, and that is the tone here.** ³
 - iv. **Worship is** – The act of adoring and praising God, that is, ascribing worth to God as the one who deserves homage and service. The church, which is to be a worshipping community (1 Pet 2:5), expresses its worship corporately and publicly (liturgically) through prayer; through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; through the reading and exposition of Scripture; through observance of the sacraments; and through individual and corporate living in holiness and service. ⁴
- c. **The Great Commandment** – Matt. 22:34-40
 - i. ³⁴ **But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.** ³⁵ **And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.** ³⁶ **"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"** ³⁷ **And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.** ³⁸ **This is the great and first commandment.** ³⁹ **And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** ⁴⁰ **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**
 - ii. **To love God is to worship him.**
 - 1. Why? Because if you love him you will see him for who he truly is and respond accordingly, that is praise and worship.
 - a. The act of submitting to God is itself a worshipful act. → Why? Because you are exalting God over self.
 - iii. **We are called to love him with our whole selves (heart, mind, soul, and strength).**

² Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 217–218.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 307.

⁴ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 122.

1. That is we are called to worship him with the whole fabric of our lives.

d. **Worship as resistance.**

- i. **“When we engage in faithful and daily worship, we resist the powers and lies of this age.”**
- ii. Moreover, our worship must be directed not only toward praising and honoring God, but toward building up and honoring the body and its members. This means that most of us need a major renovation of our concept of worship. We tend to determine whether a worship service was “good” on the basis of our enjoyment of it. We even pick the church we will join on the basis of whether the worship fulfills our needs. This concern for meeting our needs is not entirely improper, but focus on meeting *our* needs is inappropriate for believers. Worship is good if it builds up the church as a whole by benefiting the individual members and uniting them to one another.⁵
- iii. **v.10c – “The spirit of prophecy...” our worship is to make Jesus clear.**
 1. A paraphrastic rendering would be: “those giving the testimony to [and from] Jesus are prophetic people.” This understanding is reflected in all the major English versions, which have “spirit” instead of “Spirit” (e.g., NASB, KJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV) or which give a paraphrase that avoids using “Spirit.”⁶
 2. “Spirit of prophecy,” which was to be a witness to the presence of the messianic era and, therefore a witness here to Jesus as the only true object of worship (in contrast to angelic mediators of revelation [19:10a], idols, and the like). This Spirit was to be a possession of all those living in the latter-day community of faith (so Joel 2:28–32; Ezek. 39:29).⁷
 - a. Prophets had the job of making God known and the Words of God clear to the people. Here, the role of prophecy is to make Jesus known and clear. That is the testimony of the gospel proclaimed in word and deed. John, being an Apostle, seemed to have a unique call in this era of the life of the church.
 3. When we see our lives primarily as acts of worship that testify to the goodness and supremacy of Christ, we resist the lies and powers of this age.

2. **How does worship go wrong?** (I.e., Idolatry)

- a. A reminder from Revelation chapters 17-18: The excesses of Babylon play into our disordered desires. The primary disordered desire is the elevation of self over all else.
 - i. **“The basic sin, for Christianity, is rejecting others in order to choose oneself, deciding *against* others and deciding for oneself. ... This is the exact opposite of everything Jesus ever did or taught.”** – Thomas Merton ⁸
 - ii. This elevation of self has implications for our relationship with God (vertical) and with others (horizontal).
- b. Idolatry disrupts worship.

⁵ Richard L. Pratt Jr, *I & II Corinthians*, vol. 7, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 252.

⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 947–948.

⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 948.

⁸ Thomas Merton, *Confessions of a Guilty Bystander*. (p. 172)

- i. "An idol is anything we look to for things that only God can give."
- ii. Idolatry disrupts worship because it keeps us from loving God with our whole selves.
 - 1. Jesus speaks about this dynamic in Matt. 6:24
 - a. ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.
 - 2. The larger passage is about trusting God for daily provision and seeking the kingdom of God above all else.
- iii. We are wired to seek and experience glory. → Why? Because we were created to worship God and participate in his glory.
 - 1. Idolatry makes the pursuit of glory about self and removes it from being focused on God.
- c. **One of the simple truths that Revelation repeatedly points us to is that only God deserves my worship.**
 - i. Man is not capable of saving himself. → There are two pictures of man in Revelation – deceived or faithful.
 - ii. Revelation helps us to see God clearly.

3. The God who deserves worship.

- a. **Just** – The main point of ch. 18 was that the saints were to rejoice over God's judgment of Babylon because that judgment demonstrated the integrity of the Christians' faith and God's justice. Ch. 19 begins with the phrase "after these things," "these things" being primarily the vision of Babylon's demise, especially as portrayed in 18:20–24 ⁹
- b. **Trustworthy** – Past tense completion of a future event.
 - i. What motivates the worship of the multitudes? What inspires the faithfulness of the believers reading the text? The future reality that is written about in a past tense sense in Revelation. The Bible routinely speaks of future events of God as if they have already happened. This is a device that teaches us of the assurance of what will happen. I.e., God can talk about what will happen as if it has happened because it is such a sure thing.
- c. **Almighty & Powerful** – v.3 The phrase "forever and ever" (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων) refers to an unending period, as throughout the book (**so thirteen times, often referring to the eternal being of God**). For the metaphorical sense of ascending smoke as a continual memorial see 8:4, where the smoke is a picture of the saints' prayers, and the continual ascent of the smoke is a figure for the continual reminder to God in those prayers.¹⁰
- d. **Worthy of glory** – v.8 – **The *dikaiōmata* (justice) were given to the saints, not provided by them. The white robes of the multitude in 7:9, 14 were not provided by any righteous act on the part of the wearers, but were the result of washing in 'the blood of the Lamb'. So is it here.**¹¹

⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 926.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 929.

¹¹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 216.

4. Living a life of faithful worship. (v.9)

a. Faithful worship helps to repeatedly reorder my life.

- i. Chaotic worship soon becomes no worship at all. This is why Paul insisted that whatever we do in the worship of God must be done in an orderly and decent way.¹²
- ii. Moreover, our worship must be directed not only toward praising and honoring God, but toward building up and honoring the body and its members. This means that most of us need a major renovation of our concept of worship. We tend to determine whether a worship service was “good” on the basis of our enjoyment of it. We even pick the church we will join on the basis of whether the worship fulfills our needs. This concern for meeting our needs is not entirely improper, but focusing on meeting *our* needs is inappropriate for believers. Worship is good if it builds up the church as a whole by benefiting the individual members and uniting them with one another.¹³
- iii. It reorders my life by resetting my perspectives, filling me to be scattered into my daily life, reminding me of who God is and who I am, and in the corporate sense, it encourages me that I am not alone in this struggle.

b. Another look at what it means to be found faithful.

- i. Revelation compels and calls us to conquer the passions of this age. Not by our own strength, but by repeatedly aligning ourselves with Christ.
 - ii. Michael Gorman says: **“Calling Revelation ‘resistance literature’ is appropriate because one of the primary prophetic purposes of Revelation is to remind the church, both then and now, not to give in to the demands or practices of a system that is already judged by God and is about to come to its demise. But Revelation is not just a document that stands against something. Like all biblical prophecy, it promotes true worship of the one true God, expressed not merely in formal liturgy but also in faithful living, the practice of having no gods besides God.”**¹⁴
- c. Lives of living sacrifice... an offering.
- i. Paul appeals to the church in Rome to see their very lives (day in and day out) as acts of worship. – Rom. 12:1-2
 1. **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”**
 2. How do we do this?
 - ii. Actively praise God.
 1. Remember what God has done to give you victory.
 - iii. Rule over evil by doing good.
 1. Do not give in or compromise to the deceptive powers of this age.
 - iv. Enjoy God's presence.
 1. Connect with God daily in meaningful prayer and study.
 - v. Resist this age by identifying with Jesus.
 1. Remember, you are a sojourner and an exile in this age. You no longer belong to this age. Instead, you belong to Christ Jesus. (1 Pet. 2:9)

¹² Richard L. Pratt Jr, *I & II Corinthians*, vol. 7, Holman New Testament Commentary (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 252.

¹³ Richard L. Pratt Jr, *I & II Corinthians*, vol. 7, Holman New Testament Commentary (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 252.

¹⁴ Chester, Tim. *Revelation For You: Seeing history from heaven's perspective* (pp. 126-127). The Good Book Company.