



STEVE PRUITT

A
REVELATION
OF
WORSHIP

JOHN'S VISION OF HEAVEN'S WORSHIP

A Revelation of Worship
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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this book to my children Matthew, Amber, Anna, Ashley and Angie. The joy you have brought to my life has given me a taste of heaven. To have our family standing before the throne of God in worship will be one of the crowning moments of my journey. I love you more than words can say.

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PREFACE

A few years ago I was leading worship one Saturday evening with a friend of mine at his church. We were well into the service when I began to hear voices coming from our monitor speakers. The only person singing through the sound system besides my friend and I was my wife. When the service was over we compared notes and realized that all of us had heard the voices. The only conclusion we could draw was that angels had decided to join us for the service. The worship of heaven had invaded the worship on earth.

Many times over more than twenty years of leading worship I have been given reports of people hearing angelic voices during worship services. Others have reported seeing angels. One such report came from a lady who saw a giant angel hovering over the worship band one Sunday morning. This was especially edifying to me because I need all the help I can get.

There are many instances in scripture where ordinary people saw into the heavenly dimension. One such instance occurred when the shepherds saw and heard angelic beings proclaiming the birth of Christ. Stephen, the martyr, saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56), and Isaiah saw the Lord in His holy temple (Isaiah 6:1). Most of us tend to view heaven as directional when in reality it is dimensional. Heaven is all around us. God is not way off “up yonder” somewhere. He is among us in a dimension we cannot see with the physical eye.

As we worship we are joining thousands of other created beings. We are but one small part of creation that is worshipping its creator. Revelation 5:11-12 reads, *Then I looked and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne...and the number of them was ten thousand and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.* The whole universe rings out with praise and adoration for its creator, and we have the awesome privilege of joining the chorus.

In Ephesians 2:6 Paul writes that God has made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Notice this is not just a future hope but a present reality. You may look around and wonder how this could be heaven (especially during rush hour), but if our eyes were opened to a higher dimension we would see ourselves seated with Christ in heavenly places. Yes, we are seated in eternity. In the not too distant future this reality will come to fruition and we will see Christ face to face. How we prepare now is vital in determining our status when we are in the presence of the God of the universe.

What is happening in heaven right now? I’ve never been there so I can’t speak from experience. My guess is most of you haven’t been there either. The Apostle John went there though, and we have his first hand account in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. He not only described for us things that are to come but gave us a description of the worship taking place in heaven. In John’s vision we also find vivid descriptions of those who offer worship to the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

In *A Revelation of Worship* I focus on the revelations received by those who are drawn into worship and the lifestyles they possess. In many instances I use a “non-traditional” approach to the interpretation of the Revelation. This is helpful in establishing a “now” mentality of the book and pulls the reader away from the “some day.”

Please keep in mind as you read this book that the name of John’s book is The Revelation of Jesus Christ not the Revelation of the End Times. Though The Revelation does contain some end time events the purpose of John’s revelation is to reveal Jesus as the Redeemer and conquering King. Many who teach The Revelation of Jesus Christ as strictly an “end times” book seem to spend more time on the “anti-christ” than on the Conquering Christ.

As you read these pages I trust that God will reveal himself to you in a way you have never seen him and that your revelation causes you to fall more in love with Jesus.

CHAPTER 1

The Revelation of the Four Living Creatures

In 1992 some friends and I attended a Regional Worship Leaders Institute Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The first evening of the conference worship leader/song writer Steve Fry shared a conversation that took place between him and God. I can't remember every detail of the story, but the main points had an impact on my view of worship.

Steve said he told God that as much as he loved him, he believed he would get bored doing as the four living creatures in heaven who continually cry, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is and is to come.* (Revelation. 4:8) He wondered how these creatures could do this and never become tired. The Lord told him that as these creatures worship him he gets so excited that he has to reveal a little more of himself to them. When he does the creatures get so excited they begin their worship all over again.

After the letters to the seven churches in Asia, John begins to record what he saw in his heavenly vision. In chapter four he gives a description of the throne room and tells of the four living creatures. I don't pretend to understand exactly what these creatures are or what they may represent. The question I have is this, "What revelation did these creatures have that prompted their "non-stop" worship?"

To begin to answer that question we don't have to look much further than their first three words, "Holy, holy, holy." The number three in scripture is often used to signify that something is full or complete. For instance we have the Trinity that consists of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the fullness of God. By repeating holy three times these creatures were beholding something that was completely holy.

The Greek word used for holy in Revelation 4:8 is *hagios*. *Hagios* means sacred, physically pure and morally blameless. God may be more holy than he is anything else. There is no evil, corruption or sin neither in him nor around him (1 John 1:5). Wherever his presence resides is holy.

The psalmists were aware of the holiness of God having written, *You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.* (Psalm 22:3) They also understood that God's holiness was an attribute which entitles him to be worshiped. *Let them praise Your great and awesome name--He is holy.* (Psalm 99:3) *Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool--He is holy.* (Psalm 99:5) *Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy.* (Psalm 99:9)

We get a picture of God's holiness in Exodus 3:5 when Moses encounters a burning bush that is not consumed. As Moses approaches the bush he is instructed to take off his shoes because the place where he is standing is holy ground. What made that ground more holy than the ground ten feet away?

Judson Cornwall wrote in his book *David Worshiped a Living God*, "Every expression of petition, praise and worship that David released to God, he communicated to a holy God whose dwelling place was holy by virtue of the divine Presence. Still, David had to admit "*O God, You are more awesome than your holy places.*" (Psalm 68:35) It is the character of God that makes the habitation of God sacred." The ground where Moses was standing was holy because God was there. Where God is, is holy, because God is holy.

Could it be that today's church has lost it's since of awe at the holiness of God? Could that be the reason that in so many places ritual has taken the place of relationship and true worship? For not only is God holy, he expects holiness from his worshipers. King David wrote, *Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.* (Psalm 29:2)

In the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples he began, *Our Father in heaven, hallowed (holy) be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* (Luke 11:2) I believe God's will is that he be worshiped on earth as he is in heaven. To enter heaven's worship we must have a revelation of the holiness of God and be in pursuit of holiness in our personal lives. Hebrews 12:14 says, *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.* We must remember that worship is much more than a declaration; it is a way of life.

Another three word phrase in the declaration of the four living creatures that reveals the source of their adoration is "*Lord God Almighty.*" To get a clearer picture of "Lord God Almighty" let's take a look at the Greek meaning of each word; the language in which the New Testament was written.

The Greek word used for Lord is the word kurios. Kurios means supreme in authority, controller. Theos is the Greek word used for God. It means a deity, the supreme divinity. Almighty is translated from the Greek word pantokrator which means the all ruling God, as absolute and universal sovereign. When we put them all together we might come up with this definition: The supreme deity in absolute, sovereign control of the universe.

These four living creatures were beholding the one who is in control of all things; the one who has all power and holds all things in his hands. Several times in the Revelation this Supreme Deity is referred to as "The One who sits on the throne." In other words: The One who dwells in power. The psalmist put it this way, *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.* (Psalm 115:3) This revelation of God leaves no room for other rulers. There are no equals. No one gives him counsel.

There were others in the heavenly realm that had the same revelation. In Revelation 11:17 the twenty-four elders worship God saying, *We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty...* Those who have victory over the beast in Revelation 15:3 sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb saying, *Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty.*

Heaven responds with expressive worship as God reveals himself as the Almighty. Some fall on their faces in worship while others sing. Our worship response should be no different. Do we dare claim to know him yet stand Sunday after Sunday with our hands in our pockets and our minds miles away? Do we dare claim to know him yet live each day as if we are in control of our lives?

In Revelation 19:11-16 Jesus is revealed as the conquering king. He appears on a white horse. His name is called The Word of God and written on his robe and thigh is the name King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will come again and forever put an end to all evil and those who have challenged his authority. Yet he reigns today and commands our worship. If he is to rule in our hearts all other rulers will have to go. Paul wrote to the Philippians;

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

If we are to enter heaven's worship we must have a revelation of Almighty God and not only respond with outward expression but also yield our lives to his Lordship. He must sit on the throne of our hearts.

We have explored the first two revelations given to these four living creatures. In the last part of their declaration we find another attribute of the One they are beholding; "Who was and is and is to come."

When my children were younger they periodically asked questions like, "Where did God come from?" or "How old is God?" or "Does God have a mommy and daddy?" They had listened to us share about their beginnings in the world and about the existence of God. Being curious about God's beginnings was natural to their developing reasoning.

Of course God does not exist in terms that human reasoning can understand. He exists outside of time, he is eternal. Moses wrote, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* (Psalm 90:2) Another psalmist wrote *Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.* (Psalm 93:2) God has always

been. He has no beginning. Jehovah, translated Lord, is the Jewish national name for God and means self-existent; eternal.

Not only does God have no beginning, he has no end. God is not constrained by time. In his book *The Knowledge of the Holy* A.W. Tozer, speaking of the four living creatures, says, "...they are identifying God with the flow of creature-life with its familiar three tenses; and this is right and good, for God has sovereignly willed so to identify himself. But since God is uncreated, he is not himself affected by that succession of consecutive changes we call time. God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God."

God reveals himself in Revelation 1:8 as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The prophet Isaiah quotes God as saying, *Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.* (Isaiah 46:9-10) God sees the end from the beginning; they are the same to him. Eternity goes just as far backwards as it does forwards. Frederick W. Faber penned, "No age can heap its outward years on Thee; Dear God! Thou art, Thyself, Thine own eternity."

These living creatures are worshiping in the presence of eternity. When we worship, we too worship in the presence of eternity. For wherever God's presence dwells so does eternity. Our bodies may be stuck in time, but our worship is eternal because eternity inhabits our praise.

To quote Tozer again, "We who live in this nervous age would be wise to meditate on our lives and our days long and often before the face of God and on the edge of eternity. For we are made for eternity as certainly as we are made for time, and as responsible moral beings we must deal with both."

My son Matthew had a T-shirt once that read, "It's not that life is too short but it's that you are dead for so long." If we are to make worship a way of life we must live each day with the realization that eternity is a breath away. To enter the worship of heaven we must pour out glory, honor and thanksgiving to the Father as if we have already passed from this mortal body to immortality.

We are called to worship a holy God, an almighty God, and an eternal God. We are also called to be holy, to bow to the lordship of God in our lives and make him our eternal affection.

CHAPTER 2

The Revelation of the Twenty-Four Elders

When I was growing up I had a pet dog named Snoopy. He was part Hound and part German Shepard. Snoopy and I were best friends. We spent a lot of time together especially in the summer when school was out. We went hunting together, and he always followed me wherever I rode my bike. He always went with me to take out the trash or to the mailbox.

Snoopy was very protective of me and my brother. Once my granddaddy and I were wrestling in the yard and Snoopy, thinking I was in danger, almost bit my granddaddy in the face. I believe he would have given his life to protect me. Of course there were those times when we rolled around in the grass and he would pretend to bite me. Though I would be more hesitate now to let a dog lick me, then it seemed natural to let Snoopy give me all the licks he wanted. I returned his affection with lots of hugs and kisses.

In Revelations chapter 4 the Apostle John shares with us what he saw when the throne room of God was revealed to him. Besides his description of God's throne he also saw twenty-four other thrones. Sitting on these thrones were twenty-four elders dressed in white robes and wearing gold crowns. In verses nine and ten we get an idea of one roll these elders played.

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne...

Revelation 4:9-10

Six times in the Revelation we read that the twenty-four elders fall down and worship. The fact that these elders were sitting on thrones brings us to the conclusion they had some power to render judgment. However, with each new revelation of God and the Lamb they quickly desert their place of judgment and take the proper place of worship. I believe this should serve as an example for church elders today. The first position an elder should hold is that of worshiper. It is from that position wisdom is gained to judge.

The Greek word used for worship in Revelation 4:10 is proskuneo. Proskuneo is the Greek word most translated worship in the New Testament. It means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; to fawn or crouch; to prostrate oneself in homage, do reverence to, adore. Though I didn't recognize it at the time, Snoopy gave me one of my first examples of worship. In our worship of the Father we take the place of the pet as we stroke our master with love licks.

Another interesting act performed by these twenty-four elders is that they cast their crowns before the throne. In ancient times crowns were given to rulers or athletes; individuals who had conquered something. A good example of this can be seen in the movie Ben Hur. Judah Ben Hur, played by Charlton Heston is presented with a crown by Pontius Pilate after winning the chariot race.

Paul makes reference to the presentation of crowns in his correspondence to the Corinthians and his disciple Timothy.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

2 Timothy 2:5

In his letters to the Philippians and Thessalonians Paul says the believers living in those cities are his crown; meaning they are the reward for his labor (Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19). Other crowns are mentioned in scripture such as the crown of righteousness (II Timothy 4:8), crown of life (James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10), and the crown of glory (I Peter 5:4). All of these crowns are rewards for obedience to the call of God.

John writes in Revelation 19:12 that the rider of the white horse, which is Jesus, is wearing many crowns. In *Manners and Customs of the Bible* James M. Freeman writes that monarchs who claimed authority over more than one country wore more than one crown. The vision of Jesus wearing many crowns establishes the truth that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He has conquered and claimed all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18).

The twenty-four elders took the glory they had received for their work and laid it before the throne of God. They understood that the only one worthy to receive glory was the one who sat on the throne. Jesus was their King and Lord and they adorned him with their crowns. They also understood what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that no flesh should glory in God's presence and let him who glories, glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:28-31).

To enter into heaven's worship we must have a revelation that Jesus alone is worthy of glory and lay our crowns (glory) at his feet. We must prostrate ourselves before his presence and lavishly worship our King.

These elders hold an enviable position in John's vision. Seated around the throne of God they have access to the grandest revelations of the Creator and his Son. These revelations produce worship responses that only those who have intimate relationship with the King dare to offer. Their relationship with the King is evident for only those with such intimacy are given such access to the throne room.

It can be debated as to who exactly these elders are or what they may represent. In the bible twelve seems to be a number which represents completion. There were twelve patriarchs and also twelve disciples which equals twenty-four. Though I believe in their literal existence, I also believe they represent the totality of the church in the presence of God. Paul wrote the Ephesians;

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...

Ephesians 2:4-6

Because of God's great mercy and grace we are now seated with him in the heavenly places. We don't have to wait for the sweet by and by. Through Jesus we have established the proper relationship that has gained us access to the throne room and, more importantly, to the King. Like the twenty-four elders our response to his presence is uninhibited worship.

As we search through the Revelation we find some other interesting facts about the twenty-four elders. In Revelation 5:8 the elders are portrayed with harps and golden bowls of incense which are the prayers of the saints. They also sing a new song before the throne and the Lamb. Again, the elders represent the worshiping church; musically and vocally. They also have the privilege of offering petitions before God because of their intimate relationship with him. In Revelation 5:5 and 7:13 they also give prophetic insight into the activity of heaven.

From their position around the throne, these elders were given a divine revelation of God as "creator of all things." In chapter four, as the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to God the twenty-four elders respond by saying, *You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.* (Revelation 4:11)

Five times in the Revelation it is stated that God is worthy to receive glory, honor and power. To give him glory, honor and power means that God alone deserves to have all eyes look to him, to be noted above all others and to be seen as valuable and precious. He is to be esteemed in the highest degree and to have all power and strength and to be power itself. In other instances glory, honor and power are mentioned along with salvation, thanksgiving, strength, wisdom, riches, blessing and might (Revelation 5:12; 7:12; 19:1). To be worthy to receive something means there has been some action performed by the recipient. Why is God worthy? He created all things! Thus, he has met the requirements and is worthy to be worshiped.

The Greek word used for created in Revelation 4:11 expresses the idea of proprietorship of the manufacturer. This means that God fabricated or originally formed all things. By his will, (his determination, choice, purpose, volition, or decree) they exist. In other words by his determined choice and for his specific purpose he decreed the existence of all things. Paul wrote the Colossians;

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Colossians 1:16-17

Psalm 148:5 gives the command for all of creation to give praise to God because, *He commanded and they were created*. To participate in heaven's worship service we must join with the elders and all of creation and worship the Father with hugs and kisses. Everything we may have gained in this world must be laid at the feet of the One who is worthy to receive all glory.

CHAPTER 3

The Revelation of the Lamb

Maybe one of the most moving revelations of Jesus is found in the fifth chapter of The Revelation of Jesus Christ. I share this in my book *The Ingredients of Worship*, but it is worth another look. John begins his vision in chapter five by noticing a scroll in the right hand of him who sits on the throne.

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals? And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

Revelation 5:1-7

Though it was the Lion of the Tribe of Judah that prevailed to open the scroll it was a lamb as though it had been slain that John saw standing in the midst of the throne. This is significant in that John's readers understood very well the meaning of a slain lamb. There is no doubt that when they read John's account their minds went back to the day that their ancestors killed the first Passover lamb in Egypt.

After years of bondage God heard the cries of Israel and sent a deliverer to bring them into the land he had promised their forefathers. One last plague would finally bring Pharaoh to his knees; the death of his first born and the entire first born in Egypt.

God gave Moses specific instructions to ensure the Israelite firstborn didn't meet the same fate as the Egyptian firstborn. They were to take a male lamb, without blemish, in its first year and kill it. The blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled on the doorpost and the lintel of the house. God told the Israelites that the blood would be a sign for them and that when he saw the blood he would pass over them and not destroy them with the plague (Exodus 12:1-13).

This event was so significant that the Lord commanded Israel, *So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.* (Exodus 12:14)

Early in the ministry of John the Baptist he identified Jesus as being the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). Perhaps John the Baptist understood the words of the prophet Isaiah, *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So he opened not his mouth.* (Isaiah 53:7) The Apostle Peter understood the meaning of the lamb when he penned, *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without*

blemish and without spot. (1 Peter 1:18-19) And the Apostle Paul left no doubt as to the identity of the Passover Lamb when he wrote, *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

We can understand now why it was so important to Jesus that he celebrate Passover before his death (Luke 22:15). It was during his last Passover that he offered his disciples the bread and the wine as a representation of his body and blood which would be broken and poured out so that they would not suffer the plague of death.

Knowing the identity of the Lamb that John saw is crucial. Understanding the meaning of the scroll is equally important. This revelation of the Lamb not only reveals the person of Christ, his power to open the scroll is a spring board to the interpretation of the rest of the Revelation.

Once Israel had conquered the enemies of the promised land each tribe was given a portion of the land as an inheritance. This land was their most prized possession. It was passed down from generation to generation and was the object of many wars. Wars continue to be fought over the land today.

Occasionally a family would fall on hard times and would be forced to sell their land and serve the new owners as slaves. When the property was sold two documents were used as proof of the transaction; a sealed scroll and an open scroll. The open or unsealed scroll stated the purchaser as the new owner of the land. It was the public transaction of the purchase. The sealed scroll contained the details of the sell and the terms of redemption. This scroll had the signatures of witnesses on the back.

There were two ways a Jewish family could regain possession of their land once it had been sold. The first was known as the Year of Jubilee. Every fifty years all the titles of purchased land were automatically returned to the original owners (Leviticus 25). The second way the land could be returned was by the law of the kinsman-redeemer. If they were willing and had the means a person who was the nearest of kin to the original land owner or another person could redeem the land and return it to the original owner.

The law of the kinsman-redeemer is portrayed in the story of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz redeemed the land that Elimelech had sold during a time of famine. In doing so he returned it to Naomi, Elimelech's wife, and then married Ruth so the family name would be passed down to future generations. Jesus was born of this lineage.

In the book of Jeremiah we find evidence of the sealed and open scrolls. God commanded Jeremiah to purchase the field of his uncle's son Hanameel. When Jeremiah bought Hanameel's field in Anathoth, he had witnesses to sign the scroll and then he sealed it. God instructed Jeremiah, *Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel that they may last many days.* (Jeremiah 32:14)

The only way the sealed scroll could be opened was when a nearest kinsman was willing to pay the price of redemption. That is why John began to weep; no one was found worthy to open the scroll. He realized that the inheritance had been sold and there was no way to get it back. However, the elders knew something that John was soon to learn. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David had prevailed to open the scroll.

It was not by coincidence that the slain Lamb opened the scroll that had been sealed. In doing so he established himself as the kinsman-redeemer. Not only was he willing to purchase the lost inheritance he was also able to pay the necessary price for redemption. The price he had paid for redemption was his blood.

Mankind had lost his inheritance in the Garden of Eden. Man was a slave to sin and alienated from the presence of God. But now a kinsman-redeemer was found who was worthy to pay the price, canceling man's debt, thus making a way for God and man to be re-united. Jesus became the object of heaven's worship not because he opened the scroll to reveal what would happen in the "end times" but because he had paid the price to become the kinsman-redeemer. This led all of creation into a new song.

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood. Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and have made us kings and priests to our God. And we shall reign on the earth.

Revelation 5:8-10

John goes on to share that he looked and heard the voice of many angels who accompanied the elders and the four living creatures. The number was so vast that he could not count them. He also heard every creature in heaven, earth, the sea and under the earth giving glory to the Lamb.

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, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

Revelation 5:13

To enter heaven's worship the revelation of Jesus as the kinsman-redeemer must become a reality in our lives. Once his blood has cleansed you of sin your response should be no different than that of the inhabitants of heaven. As the psalmist said, *He has put a new song in my heart, even praise to our God.* (Psalm 40:3)

The vision the Apostle John was given on the isle of Patmos cannot necessarily be put in chronological order. John was in the spirit when he was given the vision where time has no constraints. Though Jesus' finished work was manifest at Calvary we read in Revelation 13:8 that he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The cross was not something God thought of around 33 A.D. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is a glorious portrayal, not only of a slain Lamb, but also a conquering king who has come to share the spoils of victory with the citizens of his kingdom.

In Revelation 5 Heaven exploded with worship at the revelation of Jesus as the kinsman-redeemer. Every being of creation joined the exaltation. This divine worship service continues in chapter seven after the sealing of the 144,000. On this occasion another extraordinary group of people join in to exalt the conquering Lamb.

After these things I looked and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!

Revelation 7:9-10

Two things stand out about this multitude of people; they were dressed in white robes and they had palm branches in their right hands. The fact that they were dressed in white is significant because white is the color for purity. These worshipers had been washed by the blood of Jesus and cleansed by his saving grace (Revelation 7:14).

The Greek word for salvation in this passage means rescue, safety, deliver and health. This great multitude was sharing in the benefits of the victory over sin and death accomplished by the Lamb. They had something for which to rejoice. The palm branches in their right hands were symbolic of their rejoicing. The reason for the rejoicing was the victory of the Lamb.

Palm branches were used as an expression of triumph and joy. When kings and conquerors returned from military victories palm branches were laid in the streets and waved in the air as the people shouted for joy. This was probably the thought behind the people's response when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Many of the Jewish people believed he was going to be the one who would deliver them from Roman rule. Their cry of "Hosanna!" was a cry for Jesus to save them.

Roman military triumphs were often followed by elaborate processions down the streets of Rome. There were certain criteria with which a conqueror had to comply to warrant such exaltation. Among the requirements was that the victory had to be decisive with a large number of enemy combatants killed. The victory had to put an end to hostilities and extend the territory of the state.

On the day of the procession the people lined the streets to witness the grand parade. The conqueror was honored by the town officials by their presence in the parade. The conqueror was dressed in fine apparel and rode in the finest chariot drawn by four horses. Also in the parade were the spoils of war. All of the precious metals and artifacts were displayed for the people to see. Even the prisoners of war were forced to march in the parade.

The temples of the gods were opened and decorated with beautiful flowers and incense was burned from the altars. Fragrant spices were burned in the streets so all the people could smell the odor of victory. The procession ended with sacrifices and offerings being made to the gods. This was followed by

a feast in which the public was invited to attend. It is not too unreasonable to believe that the prisoners of war were made to look on as the people feasted with the king. A table was prepared for the victors in the presence of their enemies. It was a grand celebration.

Maybe this was going through the mind of Paul when, through the Holy Spirit, he penned the words of 2 Corinthians 2:14. *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge in every place.* Through Jesus' triumph on the cross and consequent resurrection he has won a decisive victory over the enemy. We are now partakers with him of that victory and have been made the fragrance of victory. He has prepared a table before us in the presence of our enemies (Psalm 23:5). Jesus will return to earth as the conquering warrior king and serve his people the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

Paul goes on to write, *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life...* (2 Corinthians 2:15-16) The smell of the burning incense in the streets of the procession was sweet to the citizens of Rome, but to the prisoners of war it meant bitter defeat and death. The enemy is not alive and well on planet earth as some have written; he may be alive but he isn't well. He has a serious headache having been bruised by the conquering Son of God (Genesis 3:15).

I am reminded here of the opening scene of the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane agonizing over his upcoming scourging and crucifixion. Satan bombards him with lies in an effort to thwart the purposes of God. As sweat drops of blood drip from Jesus' head, a snake crawls from under Satan's robe and over the arm of Jesus. With calm and purpose Jesus rises, looks at Satan, and with authority crushes the serpent's head.

It was in the Garden that Jesus won the victory over Satan. By his death on the cross he conquered sin, and by his resurrection sealed the fate of death. The total manifestation of Christ's victory will come at some point in the future, but the war has been won since the foundation of the world.

Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Has Jesus delivered you from the consequences of sin and death? If so, you have every reason to wave your palm branches (arms) and join with the heaven multitude saying, *Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!* (Revelation 7:10)

CHAPTER 4

The Revelation of the Great Multitude

In the previous chapter we introduced a great multitude of people who John saw standing before the throne of God and the Lamb. In Revelation 7:9 we learned that this multitude was dressed in white robes and had palm branches in their right hands. Who are these people? Where did they come from?

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? And I said to him, Sir, you know. So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:13-14

The elder told John that these people had come out of the great tribulation. Many biblical scholars teach that before the final return of Christ there will be a time of great tribulation called “The Seven Year Tribulation Period.” Down through the ages they have disagreed and argued over whether or not the church would endure this tribulation. Some believe in a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Others believe in a post-tribulation rapture while still others believe in a mid-tribulation rapture or catching away of the church.

Let me briefly enter the debate here by saying that no where in scripture do you find the phrase “seven year tribulation period.” The idea of a seven year tribulation period derives from a prophecy given to Daniel specifically for the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:20-27). The prophecy is known as the seventy weeks prophecy. (A day in prophecy represents a year.) Those who teach a seven year tribulation period believe that the first 69 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy has been fulfilled but move the 70th week of the prophecy to a time after the church has been removed from the earth; a pre-tribulation rapture.

The problem with this idea is the 70th week is no longer the 70th week if it doesn’t immediately follow the 69th week. There is no precedent in scripture for skipping time. The 40th year in the desert for Israel immediately followed the 39th. Jesus’ 40th day in the wilderness immediately followed the 39th. Common sense would suggest that the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy would come immediately after the 69th.

The first 69 weeks of the prophecy were fulfilled from the time the commandment was given to restore the temple (Daniel 9:25) until the time Jesus began his ministry. The 70th week then began and for three and a half years the Messiah preached deliverance to the Jews in fulfillment of the covenant God had made with them. Jesus was then crucified in the middle of the 70th week at which time he put an end to the sacrifices and offerings by the offering of his own body. For approximately the next three and a half years the gospel was preached mainly to Jews after which God shed his amazing mercy and salvation to the Gentiles as well.

The question arises; If there is a literal seven year tribulation period which begins with the removal of the church from earth and ends with the second coming of Jesus, would not those who are left behind on

the earth be able to predict the very day Jesus would return? Yet, Jesus said that no man knows the day or hour of his return (Matthew 24:36).

In light of this it stands to reason that the great multitude which John saw did not escape a “seven year tribulation period,” rather they endured great tribulation maybe even to martyrdom. Notice the scripture says that this great multitude **came out of** the great tribulation not they **came out before** the great tribulation. Maybe I have missed something here, but it would seem that to come out of something you would have to first be in something. I can’t come out of the bathroom if I’m not first in the bathroom.

One thing is for sure, Jesus promised us in John 16:33, *In this world you will have tribulation...* Everyone who follows after Christ will have tribulation. There is no “great escape.”

The Greek word used for tribulation in this Revelation passage means pressure, affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, and trouble. Using this definition can we say that Jesus suffered tribulation during his earthly ministry? Of course he did. He told his disciples, *Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.* (John 15:20) *It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!* (Matthew 10:25) If Jesus suffered tribulation so will we if we are his disciples. Paul and Barnabas preached to the converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch that through many tribulations they would enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). If the early church converts suffered tribulation should we be exempt?

In 1987 I started a small green plant business which had a meager beginning but grew to a substantial income in a couple of years. The majority of my business came from a military base located in the city where I lived. My family had just settled in to our new lifestyle when the government made a decision to close the military base.

As hard as I tried I could not make up the loss of income and finally sold what was left of my business in 1994. Our income dropped by over fifty percent the next year. Times were tough. We cut expenses as much as we possibly could and even incurred some debt, but one thing we didn’t do was stop worshiping. During the times when we thought our strength would fail we turned on worship music and ministered to the Lord. We set aside a time each week with our kids to listen to the bible being read on cassette. I spent many hours alone playing my guitar before the Lord and singing prayers of worship and petition.

I don’t mean to sound like a spiritual hero. To be honest with you I didn’t know what else to do. I had no control over my circumstances. There was no one to turn to who could fix my problem. In his infinite wisdom God allowed the brook to dry up. He didn’t owe me the luxury of being financially secure. All I had came from him. There was only one proper response; worship. Regardless of my circumstances he was worthy of my worship.

It took a few years before we were “back on our feet” you might say. Then the unthinkable happened. In January of 2003 I was told that the position I held with the company where I was employed was being eliminated. I came home, and after sharing the news with my wife, we gathered the family together to share with the kids. We had prayer and with tears we begin to sing the words of a popular worship song. Why God allowed this to happen for the second time I don’t fully understand. What I do know is that I have learned to worship in the midst of tribulation.

In the book of Acts we have a great example of what happens when God’s people worship in the midst of tribulation. In chapter 16 Luke records that Paul and Silas were preaching in Philippi and the magistrates of the city became angered. They laid hands on the two preachers, tore off their clothes and beat them with rods. When they had finished the flogging they handed Paul and Silas over to the jailer who put their feet in stocks and locked them in the inner prison. At midnight Paul and Silas began to pray and sing hymns. Consequently God sent an earthquake which shook the foundation of the prison. The doors of the prison were opened and the prisoners were loosed from their chains.

The jailer, awakened from sleep and thinking that all the prisoners had escaped, drew a sword to kill himself. Paul assured him that all the prisoners were still there. The jailer called for a light and ran to where Paul and Silas were and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved.” They told him to believe on the Lord Jesus and he and his whole household would be saved. The jailer believed and took Paul and Silas to his home and cleaned their wounds.

Can you imagine the pain Paul and Silas must have endured in that prison cell? They had been beaten with rods and no doubt had open wounds which were bleeding. The prison they were in was not like the

prisons we have today. They were damp and musty with dirt floors, very little if any light and were most likely rat infested. Yet, even in the midst of this horrible situation Paul and Silas worshiped.

The results of their sacrifice of praise were far reaching. All of the prisoners who heard Paul and Silas worship were loosed from their chains during the earthquake. As we worship in the midst of our tribulation those who witness our worship will be affected. The loosing of the prisoners and the salvation of the jailor and his household were the fruit of worship. In this case it was worship that opened the door for the preaching of the gospel.

Another result of their worship was that their chains fell off and the doors to the prison were opened. They worshiped their way to freedom. Though still in the middle of the tribulation they were free because they chose to focus on God instead of their circumstances. That's what happens when we worship in the midst of tribulation. Though the circumstances may be the same, our focus is shifted to the one who controls the circumstances.

Psalms 120-134 are known as the *Songs of Ascents*. Many scholars believe these psalms were sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. They were actually ascending or "going up" to the hill of the Lord to worship. Once they reached the top of the mountain they were in the manifest presence of God. They literally sang their way into God's presence. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 100:2 that we are to come into God's presence with singing. Worship elevates us to where God is. When we are in his presence we can see our circumstances from his point of view.

You can bet the farm that this great multitude mentioned in the Revelation had gone through seasons of tribulation. Their response in the presence of God was worship. No doubt they had learned to worship during times of pressure and affliction.

Habakkuk sang;

Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instrument.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

There is much more to Habakkuk's prayer than meets the eye. A quick look at the Hebrew words used in this acclamation reveals that this was no ordinary worship service. The Hebrew word used for rejoice in verse eighteen is *guwl*. *Guwl* means to spin around under the influence of any violent emotion. *Alaz* is the Hebrew word translated joy. It means to jump for joy. Regardless of the conditions around him, Habakkuk made a choice to radically worship God. He worshiped with song, music and dance realizing that the Lord was his strength. Isaiah writes;

Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman, says the Lord.

Isaiah 54:1

To ask a barren woman in Israel to break forth into singing seems quite ridiculous if you think about it. There were few things more shameful for women in ancient Israel than to be unable to conceive. They were often ridiculed and thought of as not being blessed by God. In some instances their husbands would even divorce them. There was not much to sing about if you were a barren woman in ancient Israel.

The Hebrew word for barren means sterile or pulled up or out by the roots. We have all been through barren times in our lives; times when it seemed like the fruit of our prayers or labor had been pulled up by the roots. All of us have areas in our lives where we do not see fruit. It could be the fruit of salvation for a family member or the conquering of a sin that so easily besets us. Maybe there is a call of God for a particular ministry that has not yet been realized or a physical problem that continues to bring anguish. Maybe, like Paul and Silas, evil men have wrongfully imprisoned you. It could be that it is time to address that barrenness with the power of song. Come into God's presence and sing over your barrenness.

There have been instances where God has opened the wombs of barren women who came before him with songs of supplication and praise. Songs of healing prayer have been a tool to bring about the healing

of various physical illnesses. I have a friend who meets with a group each week to minister to the sick. They sing and pray over these people and have seen God move in miraculous ways. In addition this song of the barren reaches to areas of spiritual barrenness.

As the children of Israel were traveling through the desert they stopped at a place called Beer. The word Beer means well. Numbers 21:16-17 reads, *From there the Israelites traveled to Beer which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, Assemble the people, and I will give them water. There the Israelites sang this song: Spring up, O well! Yes, sing about it!*

Each believer has a well. Jesus told the woman at the well that those who drink of the water he gives will have a well springing up to eternal life. He also said, *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.* (John 7:38) When you need water in a desert place begin to sing to the well. Psalm 107:35 says, *He turns a wilderness into pools of water, and dry land into water springs.* Tap in to the power of song. Begin to sing to your well. You may sing with the understanding or sing with the spirit (in tongues). Invade the heavenly places with songs of intercession and praise. Watch God invade your barrenness and bring forth fruit.

At the height of their worship experience under David's leadership, Israel was also at the height of their military victories. In conjunction with their growing worship came an enlarging of their borders. Song has been given to God's people as a tool to confront barrenness, make springs in desert places and bring victory in tribulation.

True worshipers are born out of tribulation. It is during times of tribulation that worship is perfected. It is easy to worship when all is well, however, it seems much more difficult during times of tribulation. Remember that Jesus promised that in this world you will have tribulation. However, that is not all he said in John 16:33. The rest of the verse reads, *...but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

Being a part of the great multitude, and yes even tribulation, has wonderful benefits. In verses 15-17 John records;

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:15-17

What tremendous promises! You see worship moves the heart of God, and he comforts us in our tribulation. He not only comforts us, but he works in our circumstances to bring about his greater glory and to move us to a higher level of glory. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians;

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Worship your way through tribulation, barrenness and desert places. In the midst of your darkest hour; worship. Wave those palm branches, sing and dance before the Lord. We have a savior. We have a champion. Join with the host of heaven saying, *Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.* (Revelation 7:12)

CHAPTER 5

The Revelation of Mount Zion

In Revelation 14 we are introduced to another revelation of Jesus Christ that produced worship in those who were given insight into the mystery.

Then I looked and behold a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Revelation 14:1-3

As we look at this passage we must keep in mind that John was relaying what he saw in terms understood by his Christian Jewish readers. For instance, the Jews understood about the Lamb. They had been taught about the initial Passover supper and how the lamb was sacrificed and its blood used to save them from death. Earlier in the Revelation John established Jesus as the Lamb and the one who had paid the price to redeem their lost inheritance. The readers of the Revelation were also aware of the prophetic words of Isaiah that a ruler would come from Zion.

Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily..

Isaiah 28:16

The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord.

Isaiah 59:20

Both Paul and Peter quoted Isaiah in their letters to establish that Jesus was the redeemer that God had raised up in Zion (Romans 9:33, Romans 11:26, 1 Peter 2:6). God's own words help to establish this truth as well. He spoke through the psalmist, *Yet I have set My king on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me You are My son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.* (Psalm 2:6-8)

Psalm 78:68 says that God chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which he loved. It appears that the tribe of Judah and Mount Zion are synonymous. The word Judah means praise. Judah was the tribe from which the Messiah emerged. It is not a coincidence that John's vision pictures Jesus, the Lamb and Messiah, standing on Mount Zion. The prophet Isaiah prophesied years before, *In mercy the throne will be established; and one will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.* (Isaiah 16:5) The words of Isaiah were fulfilled with the coming of Jesus.

What is the importance of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and sitting in the tabernacle of David? Why not Mount Sinai where the law was given? Why not Mount Ararat where the ark rested after the waters of judgment subsided? Why is he not seated in the temple of Solomon as so many have prophesied would happen? A brief history of Mount Zion will reveal the mystery.

Mount Zion was a stronghold in the city of Jerusalem. David captured it from the Jebusites and made his home there. It was known as the city of David and it was from Zion that David ran the affairs of the kingdom. He made laws from Mount Zion and passed judgment concerning disputes. Decisions on whether or not to go to war were made from Mount Zion. All things concerning the kingdom were set in motion from Mount Zion.

Mount Zion was not only the judicial and governmental capital of Israel it was also the religious capital. The center of worship in Mount Zion was the tabernacle of David.

After becoming king David had a great desire to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant was representative of God's presence among his people. David could never have imagined the establishment of Israel's kingdom without the accompanying of the manifest presence of God.

Before David conquered Jerusalem the ark was captured by the Philistines. The Philistines sent the ark back to Israel and it was placed in the home of Abinadab.

David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem was halted when Uzzah, Abinadab's son, was killed after putting out his hand to steady it. For three months the ark stayed in the home of Obededom until David could inquire of the Lord as to the proper way for the ark to be transported. When the day finally came for the ark to be brought to Jerusalem David, the elders, the captains, the high priests and Levites joined with singers and musicians to form a grand processional.

The ark was brought to Mount Zion and placed in a tent that David had prepared for it which was known as the tabernacle of David. David's tabernacle differed from the tabernacle of Moses. In the tabernacle of Moses the Ark of Covenant was enclosed and placed behind a thick veil in the Holy of Holies. The priests were the only people who could enter the Holy of Holies to minister before the ark. It was above the ark that God's manifest presence dwelt. David's tabernacle was an open tent in which there were no walls or veil. All of the worshipers had access to God's glory.

Once the ark was placed in the tent David established a very organized order of worship which lasted years after his death. He instructed the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals (1Chronicles 15:16). Chenaniah was the Music Master (1 Chronicles 15:27), and Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun were appointed as the Chief Musicians/Singers. Worship around the tabernacle of David was a family affair. David and the captains of the army appointed some to the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun to be singers and musicians. Their main function was to prophesy with harps, stringed instruments and cymbals (1 Chronicles 25:1).

These Levites were to minister before the Ark of the Lord as every day's work required. Twenty-four courses of twelve worshipers each, a total of 288 skilled musicians (1 Chronicles 25:7), plus an additional 4,000 musicians (1 Chronicles 23:5) were established so there was worship in the presence of God twenty-four hours a day. Was it any wonder that God enjoyed hanging out on Mount Zion? The scriptures document God's affection for Zion.

His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Psalm 87:1-2

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

Psalm 132:13-14

The order of worship David established in Mount Zion and the order of worship in the Revelation are strikingly similar. In the Revelation we have the twenty-four elders worshiping with harps and leading the host of the redeemed in a new song of worship. In Mount Zion there were twenty-four courses of singers appointed to worship and instructed in the song of the Lord. In the Revelation there are 144,000 worshipers standing with Jesus on Mount Zion. Around the tabernacle of David we find numerous multiples of 144 incorporated in the service of worship.

Mount Zion and the tabernacle of David were places of worship and represent the worshiping church today; the true Israel of God. Peter wrote to the church, *...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* (1 Peter 2:5) Paul concurs in his letter to the Ephesians *...in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* (Ephesians 2:22) The worshiping church is now the habitation of God; it is his resting place. He inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3).

Prophetic voices all across the world agree that we are in the last days before the coming of the Lord Jesus. In Acts Peter is recorded as saying, *For he (Messiah, Jesus) must remain in heaven until the time of the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his prophets.* (Acts 3: 21 NLT) In other words Jesus is literally held hostage in heaven until all things are restored. So, in these last days, God is about the business of restoration. I believe he is revealing and restoring the biblical concepts of worship, evangelism and the kingdom of God to a temple of people whose one desire is to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven.

When Jesus came to earth he came with a mission of restoration. His mission statement is found in Luke 4:18-19. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*

In his conversation with the woman at the well in Sychar, Jesus gave the proper order of kingdom worship by saying that those who worship the Father must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23). Jesus did three things to restore kingdom order; he proclaimed the word of the kingdom, demonstrated the works of the kingdom and restored the worship of the kingdom. Could it be that when John's readers recognized the Lamb standing on Mount Zion they understood that kingdom order had been restored?

God spoke through the prophet Amos concerning his plan for the restoration process.

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does this thing.

Amos 9:11-12

Amos wrote that the reason for the restoration of David's tabernacle was that the remnant of Edom and the Gentiles called by his name would be possessed. Edom was the name given to Esau and his descendants. Esau was Isaac's son who sold his birthright to Jacob. God is interested in saving or possessing all those who have sold their birthright, which all of mankind did in Adam. It is God's will that none should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

The apostles must have believed that this prophecy was fulfilled at least in part with the salvation of the Gentiles. When the council at Jerusalem convened to discuss what to do about the reports of converted Gentiles, James quotes the passage from Amos. Here is his interpretation of what Amos said: *After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.* (Acts 15:16-18)

The Hebrew word for possess used in Amos 9:12 is *yarash* (yaw-rash'). *Yaresh* means to occupy by driving out previous tenants, and possessing in their place; to seize, to rob, to inherit; also to expel, to impoverish, to ruin. God said in Psalm 60:8, *Moab is My wash pot; over Edom I will cast My shoe; Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me.* The phrase "over Edom I will cast my shoe" refers to an ancient Hebrew custom. It was believed that the right to tread on property belonged to the person who owned it. When a property was sold the owner would take off his sandal and give it to the purchaser. This represented the transfer of the property to the new owner.

Jesus, the manifest glory of God, came to restore the kingdom. God had given Adam the responsibility of subduing the earth and filling it with the glory or likeness of God. Adam failed when he sinned so God sent his son to do what Adam could not. Though God never gave up ownership of earth's dominion, Adam's failure had allowed squatters (demonic forces) to build strongholds. Jesus' mission was to capture the strongholds, remove the squatters and restore kingdom order; which he did just as David had done years earlier in Zion.

Several years ago a prophet spoke to a worship team I was leading and said, "You are the tabernacle of David and you should open up and let the glory of God out to the people." God's desire is to restore the

same spirit of worship that typified David's tabernacle. He not only desires to find his resting place in the worship of his people, but that his people worship and exalt him in such a way that his name is known, his glory is manifest and all men are drawn to him. The psalmist wrote; *Sing a new song to the Lord! Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Sing to the Lord; bless His name. Each day proclaim the good news that He saves.* (Psalm 96:1-2 NLT)

Signifying the type of death he would die, Jesus said, *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.* (John 12:32) By his death Jesus reconciled the world to God (2 Corinthians 5:19). Though he died once, never to suffer death again, we can, by our praise and worship lift him up or magnify him for all to see.

When we magnify Jesus we make him bigger much in the same way we use a telescope. The planets and stars are very large objects, yet they are difficult to see because they are so far away. The telescope brings those objects closer to the viewer so they can see the enormity of the objects. David's tabernacle was erected in a conspicuous place; Mount Zion. All who entered the city could see the glory of God and hear the praises of God. That is what our praise and worship accomplishes; it takes a huge God that seems so far away to some folks and brings him nearer for them to see. We do the magnifying, he does the drawing.

Many biblical scholars believe that the restoration of David's tabernacle is synonymous with the restoration of worship in the church today. With the restoration of worship comes the restoration of the kingdom; the fullness of the rule and reign of Christ. I believe the establishment of God's kingdom on earth is incomplete without the restoration and establishment of the proper order of worship; spirit and truth.

As the church learns and flows in the proper order of kingdom worship and authority we will see the fall of Babylon (this world's false religious system). We will see the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. So when Christ returns to deliver the kingdom to the Father he will have found us faithful. Then we will hear these words, *Well done my good and faithful servant.* (Matthew 25:21) Let's all go up to Zion!

CHAPTER 6

The Revelation of the 144,000

John saw present with Jesus in the midst of Mount Zion 144,000 servants who have his Father's name written on their foreheads. Who are these 144,000? We are first introduced to them in Revelation 7.

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

Revelation 7:1-8

John shares that he saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth who had been given the power to harm the earth and the sea. Suddenly another angel appears from the east with the seal of the living God. He commands the other angels not to harm anything until the servants of God have been sealed. The number of servants sealed by the angel were 144,000 from the tribes of Israel; 12,000 from each tribe.

Many bible teachers have taught through the years that the 144,000 are virgin Jewish males who will be sealed and preach the gospel during a seven year tribulation period. Some believe the 144,000 represent the remnant of the church that will be alive at the second coming of Jesus. Though these beliefs could be right I believe a different interpretation applies here.

There are a couple of things that catch my eye in this passage. First, traditionally when Jewish genealogies were given the oldest son was mentioned first. In the tribal listing of Revelation 7 the tribe of Judah is listed first; he was actually the fourth born. The significance of this is that Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah; the tribe of praise. Secondly, this listing of the tribes is not the same as we see in the Old Testament. There was no tribe of Joseph, but Joseph is listed in Revelation 7:8. His tribe was split into two tribes; Ephraim and Manasseh (Joshua 14:4). Ephraim is not mentioned among the tribes in Revelation 7; neither is the tribe of Dan.

I believe numbers are important only as they represent concepts. If you take a careful look at the numbers used in the Revelation who will find many numbers that are either factors or products of twelve.

For instance you have four living creature, twenty-four elders and 144,000 servants of God; 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve or forms of twelve are used in numerous places throughout scripture. Jesus had twelve disciples. David appointed twenty-four courses of twelve accomplished musicians, a total of 288, to worship twenty-four hours a day around the Ark of the Covenant that he placed in a tent on Mount Zion. Therefore it is my belief that the number twelve represents completion or totality. Hence the 144,000 represent the totality of the worshiping church which is the true Israel of God.

We have learned from Paul's teaching that, through Christ, God makes no distinction between races of people (Romans 10:12). He writes to the Roman Christians, *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.* (Romans 2:28-29) Paul also wrote to the Galatians and the Colossians that there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, but that all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11). Though I believe that God will fulfill every prophecy given concerning national Israel, I believe Paul clearly conveys that the true Israel of God consists of people who have believed on Jesus and have put away the works of the flesh, whether Jew or Gentile. This further establishes the true identity of the 144,000 servants of God. John gives a detailed description of the 144,000.

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Revelation 14:4-5

In addition to this description John says they have the mark of Jesus' Father on their foreheads and sing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth (Revelation 14:1-3). These characteristics of the 144,000 servants of God outline the qualifications for those who are true worshipers of God.

All true worshipers have the seal of God on them. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 4:11 that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of the faith of Abraham which he had while still uncircumcised. Today believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit, circumcised in heart; by the cutting away of the old man and sin nature (Roman 2:28-29). Paul wrote to Timothy, *Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* (2 Timothy 2:19) True worshipers depart from iniquity. They are not slaves of sin, but slaves to God. Paul also wrote to the Ephesians and the Corinthians concerning the seal of God.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...

Ephesians 1:13

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30

...who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

2 Corinthians 1:22

The 144,000 received the seal of God because they had trusted in him and believed the word of truth. Their belief in God was more than just a mental acknowledgement that he existed; they had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

Many people today have watered down what it means to believe in Christ. To believe in Christ means to come under the mastery of his lordship. This means being obedient to his word and participating in his works on earth. These servants of God had his mark on their foreheads. In other words they had a change of mind. They forsook the world and false religious systems to pursue the kingdom of God.

True worshipers today are given this same mandate. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Romans 12:2) In his letter to the Colossians Paul wrote, *Set your mind on things*

above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:2) For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5)

Jesus said the greatest commandment of all is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37). God made a covenant with his people by saying, *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them. (Hebrews 10:16)*

In Revelation 22:3-4 John shares his vision of the final resting place for the servants of God. *And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*

As I have written before, “Worship is more than a time slot to be filled on Sunday morning. Worship begins before the music or preaching starts, when no one is looking. Worship is a way of life; daily giving oneself to God and his purposes.” True worshipers are those who have believed on Christ for salvation. They have been sealed by the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of that salvation. Consequently they have forsaken the works of the flesh and live by the Spirit of God. God’s laws have been written in their hearts and minds and those laws govern their behavior. True worshipers have an intimate relationship with the Father and love him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Another description of the 144,000 servants of God given to us by John is that they were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. Several times in scripture we read where God describes his people as virgins. The meaning of the word virgin in the Revelation and the Old Testament goes beyond one who has not participated in sexual activity. It refers to a person or in Israel’s case a nation, who has served only one God; one who has forsaken the works of the flesh and kept himself unspotted from the world.

Listen to how God addresses his people.

Therefore you shall say this word to them: Let My eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease; For the virgin daughter of My people has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow.

Jeremiah 14:17

Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.

Jeremiah 31:4

Set up signposts, make landmarks; Set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, Turn back to these your cities.

Jeremiah 31:21

How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; Who can heal you?

Lamentations 2:13

God declared that he was a husband to Israel. Israel was the virgin of his affection and he longed to be the affection of Israel’s heart. He said, *For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused, says the Lord. (Isaiah 54:5-6)*

Throughout the Old Testament God commanded Israel to have no other gods before him (Exodus 20:3). During times of rebellion he accused them of committing adultery with other lovers. God’s assessment of Israel’s condition was, *...She decked herself with earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot... (Hosea 2:13) You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. (Ezekiel 16:32) For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13)* Israel sought gratification in something other than God. They loved how the things of the world made them feel and defiled themselves with those things.

The word defile means to make filthy or dirty. When I think about being defiled I am reminded of my football playing days in high school. You may not have ever been in a high school locker room during football season, but let me inform you it stinks. Each Monday we began practice with clean uniforms which quickly became soiled during practice. We didn't take those uniforms home that night to be washed, we wore them all week. By the time Thursday's practice was over they were filthy. You could practically stand them up in a corner.

That is exactly what happens when we entertain the things of this world. At first it may seem not to affect us. We enjoy how it makes us feel so we continue to indulge ourselves. Soon that thing isn't enough, and we begin to turn to other sources of pleasure to fulfill our desires. Eventually we find ourselves cankered with worldliness and have forsaken what really satisfies us. We have hewn cisterns that hold no water.

The apostles exhorted the early church concerning a love for the things of the world. John wrote, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* (1 John 2:15) James adds, *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* (James 1:27) He goes on to say, *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the scripture says in vain, The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?* (James 4:4-5)

Paul, being concerned that the Corinthian believers had been deceived into believing a different gospel than the one he had preached, wrote this, *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Many people in the church today have chased after the things of this world. They have honored God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. They have been lured away from the one who betrothed them by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. However, there is no room in the true worshiper for a divided heart. Our husband is jealous for a virgin bride. True worshipers are virgins in the sense that they are married to God alone. They are not defiled with the things of this world nor have they given themselves to other gods. They have only one husband; Jesus.

John goes on to write of the 144,000;

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes...

Revelation 14:4

It was established in the earlier chapters of John's revelation that Jesus is the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne of God. To find the 144,000 standing with Jesus in the place of worship (Mt. Zion) is fitting of their character. For all those who desire to be true worshipers will always be in the place of worship, in the presence of the Lamb. However, there is a requirement for one to be in that place of worship. There is a requirement if one is to follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

Jesus made it plain what is required of those who desire to follow him. He said, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* (Matthew 16:24) *And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.* (Matthew 10:38) The requirement of a follower is to take up his cross. What does it mean to take up your cross? The answer is most likely found as we explore what the cross meant in the life and death of Jesus.

I believe one meaning of the cross in the life of Jesus is total abandonment of self to the obedience of the Father's will. Jesus' life was centered in the Father's will. He always did what he saw the Father doing. He always said what he heard from the Father. His teaching focused on the heart of the Father. Jesus came to show the world what the Father is like, and he did it all the way to the cross where he was obedient to death (Philippians 2:8). His love for the Father compelled him to be obedient. That love became the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Jesus not only endured the cross out of love for the Father, he also took the sins of the world upon himself. The shedding of his blood was the sacrifice for sin. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.* (Isaiah 53:5) The cross meant death for sin and death to sin.

True worshipers have a deep desire to do the will of the Father and that desire is a motivating force in their lives. Their lives are centered in the Father's will. All of their hopes and dreams have been placed in

the Father's hands and their lives given to his service. They go where he says to go and say what he commands them to say. They love what he loves and hate what he hates. True worshipers know the Father's will because they have his heart. They have a willingness to abandon their lives in obedience to the Father which means death to self and sin.

Athletes have a phrase they often use to describe their intensity of play. It is "Leave it all on the field." The idea is to give it all you've got. All the conditioning, weight lifting and studying the play book have brought you to game time. Preparation is over; it's time to give 100% on every play the entire game. There is no holding back or saving it for later.

Most of us would not recognize the Apostle Paul as an athlete, but in the game of life he was one on those who left it all on the field. He chose to abandon popularity, position, prosperity and power to gain an eternal prize. He wrote;

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...

Philippians 3:7-8

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

The American Heritage Dictionary renders this meaning for the word abandon: 1. To forsake; desert. 2. To surrender one's claim or right to; to give up. 3. To desist from. 4. To yield (oneself) completely, as to emotion.

What better word could describe the life the Paul? What better word could describe a person whose one desire is to live a life of worship? Paul went on to say in Philippians 3 that he counted all his gain as rubbish that he might know Christ. His one desire was to have intimate fellowship with Christ. A life of worship has deserted all other ways of living to have an intimate relationship with Jesus. It has forsaken all that is familiar to walk by faith. It has surrendered all rights to have its own way and has yielded control to the one who formed it.

The bible gives us many examples of believers who paid the ultimate price to leave it all on the field. We are not given the names of some of them; they are simply known as Others.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented -- of whom the world was not worthy...

Hebrews 11:35-38

Paul wrote to the Galatians, *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* (Galatians 6:14) Those who would follow the Lamb have died to the passing pleasures of sin. They are not enslaved to the world's system. They have been nailed to the cross with Jesus where, *...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.* (Romans 6:6) *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* (Galatians 5:24)

The Lamb followers have this testimony, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20)

The 144,000 have this testimony *...they follow the Lamb wherever he goes.* To follow the Lamb one must first go where to Lamb went. *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.* (Isaiah 53:7) The Lamb went to the slaughter. Those people who stand with Jesus in the place of worship deny themselves and take up their cross daily. They

have crucified the flesh and walk in obedience to the Spirit of God. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

As true worshipers, once we have abandoned (past tense verb) our old way of life we are called to abandoned (adjective) worship. What is abandoned worship? When abandoned is used as an adjective it means shameless; thus we have shameless worship. Shameless worship can best be described by the life of two very familiar bible characters; King David and the woman who let her hair down. You know their stories.

Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. Now as the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord...

2 Samuel 6:14-16

And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

Luke 7:37-38

David and this woman were not concerned about what those watching them thought of their worship. Their reputations were of no consequence. They were shameless in their worship. They worshiped with abandonment; a complete surrender of inhibitions.

Some time ago I heard a well known prophet by the name of James Goll speak at a conference. I'll paraphrase his remarks. He said that he had seen a target being painted with a bull's eye in the middle. As he was looking at it he saw a dart fly through the air and hit the bull's eye. He heard the Lord tell him, "My dart shall hit the bull's eye." He asked the Lord, "What is the dart?" The answer was "David's Abandoned Revolutionary Tribe" (DART). James Goll went on to say that God is releasing, not just a few, but a whole company of abandoned Davidic worship and praise warriors.

God is calling us, his virgin bride, to live a life of abandonment; to set aside all inhibitions we have about the way we live and respond to his love. God is calling for abandonment when we get up every morning and go about our daily lives. He is calling for abandonment every time we gather with believers to worship him. No more "playing it safe." It's time to be reckless with our lives and with our worship. It's time for the bride of Christ to leave it all on the field.

We come to yet another portrayal of the 144,000 servants of God standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, which gives two vivid description of the true worshipers of God. *These were redeemed from among men being first fruits to God and to the Lamb.* (Revelation 14:4)

It is impossible for a person to become a true worshiper of God unless that person has been redeemed. The Greek word for redeemed used in this scripture passage means "to go to market, purchase, or buy." No one is born into this world as a child of God. They are God's creation but not his child. Everyone is born with a sinful nature that is against the laws of God. All have sinned and fall short of his glory (Romans 3:23). The only way one can be redeemed is by the blood of the slain Lamb that is standing on Mount Zion with these 144,000. John begins the Revelation with this declaration.

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...

Revelation 1:4-6

Both Paul and Peter address this issue of redemption in their epistles.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree).

Galatians 3:13

...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

1 Peter 1:18-19

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth (the market place if you will), lived a sinless life, died a sinner's death, took our sins upon himself and with his blood purchased our souls for the Father. The first step to becoming a true worshiper is to acknowledge his work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin and allow the Father to take possession of our life. Our lives are not our own, we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). We have been redeemed from among men and are first fruits to God.

In referring to the 144,000 as first fruits, John again taps into knowledge of his readers. John, himself being Jewish, was also aware of the concept of first fruits. In the Old Testament we read of several feasts which God commanded the nation of Israel to observe. One of those feasts was the Feast of Harvest. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks and Day of First Fruits. Later the early church referred to it as Pentecost because it occurred fifty days after Passover. During the feast Israel was to offer the first fruits of their wheat harvest as a free will offering to the Lord (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10).

First fruits have always been important to God. Not only was Israel commanded to offer the first of the grain produce but also their flocks and vintage. They were also commanded to consecrate their first born males to the Lord. Solomon reflected God's heart when he said, *Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase...* (Proverbs 3:9) God, through the prophet Jeremiah, referred to Israel as the first fruits of his increase (Jeremiah 2:3).

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the churches he helped to establish, refers to the early converts as first fruits of his labor (1 Corinthians 16:15; Romans 16:5). James portrayed all believers as first fruits when he wrote, *Of His own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.* (James 1:18) Once a person allows the redeeming work of the blood of Jesus to take affect in his life he becomes a first fruit of Christ's labor. Such were the 144,000 and such are the true worshipers of God.

The Greek word for first fruits used in the New Testament means "a beginning of sacrifice." Paul wrote, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* (Romans 12:1) A sacrificial life is characteristic of those who have been redeemed and have become first fruits to God. Only those who practice sacrificial living become true worshipers.

In the description of the 144,000 standing with Jesus on Mount Zion we find two more characteristics of a true worshiper. *For in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.* (Revelation 14:5)

The Greek word used for deceit in this passage means misrepresentation or deception. To misrepresent something is to give false information that makes it appear to be something it isn't; which is deception. For years used car salesmen have been given a bad reputation for hiding the facts about a particular vehicle in order to make a sell. Often defective vehicles are made to look good on the outside so as to deceive the potential buyer. One good biblical example of misrepresentation and deception happened early in the history of mankind in the Garden of Eden.

God commanded Adam saying, *Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.* (Genesis 2:16-17) Later Satan in the form of a serpent tempts Eve to eat of the fruit. Eve tells the serpent of God's command to which the serpent replies, *You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* (Genesis 3:4-5) Satan misrepresented what God had said and deceived Eve. As a result the whole of mankind was plunged into sin. Maybe this is one reason God despises a deceitful tongue.

I believe King David speaks the heart of God in Psalm 101:7 when he says, *He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.* David reiterates this point on two other occasions in the book of Psalms.

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart...

Psalms 15:1-2

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

Psalms 24:1-4

A deceitful tongue can be traced to a deceitful heart. Jesus taught that out of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). God will not allow deceitful hearts to come into his presence. They will not be allowed to worship before him. True worshipers keep themselves from a deceitful heart. They worship in spirit and truth.

The next characteristic given of the 144,000 is that they are without fault before the throne of God. The Greek word used in Revelation 14:5 for fault means unblemished, without blame, blemish, spot or fault; faultless. When the accuser of the brethren stands before the judge of all ages to bring accusation against a true worshiper there will not be enough evidence to find the worshiper guilty. The true worshiper has been cleansed from his fault by the blood of Jesus Christ. When a person comes to Christ he is made a new creation, old things are passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...* (Colossians 1:21-22) Jesus not only died to make us blameless before God, but God himself is working in us so that we might be blameless. Paul wrote this to the early believers;

...who [God] will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:8

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

A true worshiper lives a life of holiness and keeps himself unblemished and unspotted from the world. Without holiness no one will see God or dwell in his presence (Hebrews 12:14). We look to Paul again who instructed the early church on how to be blameless.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2:14-15

...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing.

1 Timothy 6:11-14

The Apostle Peter encouraged his readers to *be diligent to be found by him (God) in peace, without spot and blameless.* (2 Peter 3:14) For someone to be diligent in something they must put forth an effort. The 144,000 had been washed in the blood of the Lamb and had been diligent in the things of God. Their reward was the opportunity to stand in the place of worship (Mount Zion) with the Lamb. This is the life of a true worshiper.

CHAPTER 7

The Revelation of the Songs of Heaven

We live in a day when our world is inundated with song. Song is a common thread that runs through every global civilization. Here in America alone we have Rock-n-Roll, Rap, Country, Pop, Head Banger, Heavy Metal, and other types of music for which I don't have names. Each of these song classifications carries with it a certain message and the power to drive that message into the hearts and minds of its listeners.

Song influences the soul in ways unrealized by spoken or written words. Song possesses the power to change attitudes and influence actions. The forces behind many of these songs are aware of their power and many listeners have succumbed to their bondage.

With demonic forces aware of the power of song is it any wonder that music and song has become a divisive element in many churches? However, many in the church have become wise to the tricks of the enemy, and as a result a new song is arising.

John records a new song in his vision of heavenly worship.

They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Revelation 14:3

We have established that the 144,000 represent the true worshipers of God. These worshipers sing a new song that only they could learn. I have heard it called the "song of the redeemed." Only those who have been bought from the darkness of hell by the blood of Jesus can sing this new song. They are given a new song because they have been made new creatures. Their lives strum to a new beat. The Apostle Paul said it this way, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Revelation 14:3 is not the first time in the Revelation that we hear of a new song being sung. In chapter 5 the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang a new song at the revelation of Jesus as the kinsman-redeemer. Can you imagine them singing in unison a song that had not been sung before? Their song came by way of revelation. In fact the only way a new song is comes forth is by way of revelation.

The Greek word for new used in Revelation 14:3 means "a fresh new thing." From time to time my girls will make a batch of chocolate chip or peanut butter cookies. The best time to eat those cookies is when they first come out of the oven. They are fresh and melt in your mouth. My wife makes home made bread occasionally. Many times the bread doesn't make it to the next meal. We want to eat it as soon as it comes out of the oven. Neither my wife's bread nor my kid's cookies have an opportunity to get stale.

A new song is much the same way. It never gets stale. Fresh revelations produce fresh new songs. The new song comes from the spirit of a person who has a fresh relationship with the Father. The Father is always revealing more of himself to those who walk close to him. As he reveals himself he gives new songs that only those to whom he is revealed can sing. It is their song to him. It is sung through them by the Holy Spirit to the Father.

Several times in The Book of Psalms David and the other psalmists refer to singing a new song. The Prophet Isaiah chimes in as well.

Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

Psalm 33:3

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Psalm 96:1

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

Psalm 98:1

I will sing a new song to You, O God; On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You...

Psalm 144:9

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints.

Psalm 149:1

Sing to the Lord a new song and His praise from the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 42:10

The Hebrew word for praise which is most associated with the new song is the word *tehillah*. *Tehillah* can be defined as “laudations or hymns. The word *tehillah* is used many times in the book of Psalms. In fact the book of Psalms is also known as the *Book of Tehillum*. In Psalm 22:3 David says that God has established his throne in the *tehillah* of his people. He writes, *But You are holy, enthroned in the praises (tehillah) of Israel...* Another psalmist writes in Psalm 100:4 that *tehillah* is how we enter into God’s presence. *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise (tehillah)...*

God has given the church many gifted song writers. As a result thousands of anointed worship songs have been written over the years that express our heart toward God. I am amazed at how music and worship have evolved in the last twenty to thirty years. When a new worship song is introduced little time elapses before the recording industry has it featured on several different labels. My guess is that the contemporary song selections in many churches in the world vary little from church to church. Christian worship would not be were it is today without these anointed writers and songs.

I am constantly searching for fresh worship songs that touch the heart of God and minister to the worshiper. However, I believe there is a higher dimension of worship where God desires for true worshipers to occupy; the dimension of the new song. No other song can express the heart of a worshiper than his own song to the Lord. I believe God is extremely blessed when we express in our own words our love for him.

I can go to the store each year on my anniversary and find a card to give my wife that conveys how I feel toward her. Or I could make a card myself, written in my own words. Which do you think my wife would prefer? She would love either, but the card I write myself would have special meaning because it came straight from my heart. Another man might use a card just like the one I buy at the store to give to his wife, but no other man can give to my wife what I write from my heart. In the same way many people may use the same song to worship God. There is no doubt that God enjoys that worship, but I believe he takes special delight in the songs that come from within the worshiper. No one else can sing that song.

Being a few years past the age of forty I have been given numerous birthday cards over the years. All of them were special and given to me by special people in my life. There are only a few of those cards that I have set back for safe keeping. Those are the hand made cards my kids gave to me. They have

special meaning for two reasons; they were made by my kids and they expressed their love for me from their own hearts in their own words.

I mentioned before that the new song is one that is fresh. Paul referred to these songs as hymns. He wrote to the churches *...but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...* (Ephesians 5:18-19) Colossians 3:16 says *...teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...* The Greek word used here for hymn is humnos. Humnos is defined to celebrate, a hymn.

When we generally think of hymns great songs like *Amazing Grace*, *How Great Thou Art*, and many others come to mind. *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing* and *Before the Throne of God Above* are among my favorites. However, these songs we refer to as hymns are actually psalms. A psalm is a set piece of music accompanied by an instrument and voice. Once a song is recorded or becomes a set piece of music it is a psalm. In fact all the worship songs we sing in church are in reality psalms.

Since hymns and psalms are different we must conclude that a hymn is a song that has not been recorded. Thus it is a new, spontaneous song sung as an overflow of love and adoration towards God. I believe that in exhorting the church to sing hymns, Paul was encouraging them to sing new songs or tehillah.

How long has it been since you sang a love song to God from your own heart? Maybe you never have or didn't know that you could. The Holy Spirit has the tune and verse just waiting for you to open your mouth and spontaneously express your love and adoration to the Father. *Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise (tehillah) from the upright is beautiful.* (Psalm 33:1)

The new song is also a tool for evangelism. God has a plan to make his name known through out the world. Psalm 76:1 says that in Judah God is known. Judah means praise. In praise God is known. David wrote, *He has put a new song in my mouth -- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord.* (Psalm 40:3) God has chosen to use the new song, tehillah, as a tool to bring the lost into his kingdom.

In Acts 16:25-34, Luke records an event where a new song could have been used to lead a jailor and his family to salvation. Paul and Silas were imprisoned. Luke writes, *Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.* (Acts 16:25 NLT) The Greek word for the phrase "singing hymns" is humneo which means to hymn or sing a religious ode. My personal belief is that Paul and Silas were singing a new song. Whether the song they sang was a new song or not, their worship reached the ears of the Lord who shook the prison. The earthquake freed Paul, Silas and the rest of the prisoners from their chains. It not only opened the doors of the prison it opened the door for the preaching of the gospel.

Twice in the Revelation of Jesus Christ John records hearing a new song. In chapter 14 he shares his revelation of Jesus standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000 servants of God. Mount Zion as we have established was the resting place of the ark of God in David's tabernacle and the resting place of God himself. Jesus is standing in the midst of the praises of his people represented by the 144,000.

The 144,000 were singing a **new song** that only they could learn because they had been redeemed from the earth. Immediately after he hears the **new song**, John sees *another angel flying through the heavens carrying the everlasting Good News to preach to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language and people.* (Revelation 14:6 NLT) This seems to connect the singing of the **new song** to the preaching of the gospel. It also sounds very similar to the first time John records hearing the **new song** in heaven.

In chapter 5 John witnesses the slain Lamb take a scroll out of the hand of him who sits on the throne. This action moves the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders to fall down before the Lamb and sing a **new song**. They sang, *You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For You were killed, and Your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.* (Revelation 5:9 NLT) Again the **new song** of praise seems to have a direct connection with the salvation of mankind.

Not only is the new song a tool for evangelism it is also a weapon for spiritual warfare; the bringing down of demonic strongholds. John continues in Revelation 14.

Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water. Another angel followed saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Revelation 14: 6-8

As the 144,000 sang this new song it seemed to bring a pronouncement of judgment on all who followed the beast and also brought down the walls of the demonic kingdom. The psalmist had some revelation of the power of the high praises of God which could include the new song. He wrote, *Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations (heathen in King James), and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord.* (Psalm 149:5-9)

There appears to be two levels of the spirit world mentioned in this verse, “kings” and “nobles.” The kings might refer to high ranking demonic forces. The nobles might refer to the lesser powers of darkness. Our weapons against both levels are the high praises of God in our mouth and a two-edged sword (the word of God) in our hand. These weapons find their way into the heavenlies and become not only offerings of worship to God but effective tools for evangelism and warfare.

A few years ago our family was on vacation and decided to visit a church for the Sunday morning worship service. The church had a contemporary style service and the music carried us into a time of intimacy with the Father. As we loved on the Father one of the ladies singing with the praise team began to rebuke Satan. She drove him out of the building, out of the city and out of the state. She bound his activity over the lives of the people in that church and all other churches. What was probably only a minute seemed a lot longer as she vehemently addressed every work of darkness that might be listening.

It could be that this lady saw something I didn’t see. All I know is that one minute I was snuggled in the Father’s arms and the next minute all my thoughts were turned to Satan. My guess is that I was not alone. In my humble opinion, Satan, if he was listening, got exactly what he wanted; our attention diverted from the Father and focused him. He likes attention, he thinks it is worship.

Through the years I have heard spiritual warfare taught from a number of angles. I have been involved in services that focused on spiritual warfare and participated in rebuking certain principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. During these “intercessory” prayer meetings we engaged territorial demons over nations and cities from the four corners of world. Although we called this warfare, which may have some validity, I have come to believe there is a higher place of warfare where God wants his people involved. It’s the place of high praise.

When Jehoshaphat was king over Judah the people of Moab, Ammon and others came to battle against him. Upon hearing the news Jehoshaphat was scared and called a fast throughout all Judah to seek the face of the Lord. In the midst of the fast the Spirit of the Lord moved on the heart of Jahaziel to prophesy God’s victory for Judah over their enemies. Jehoshaphat and the people responded with praise and worship (2 Chronicles 20).

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying; Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever. Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against all the people of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

2 Chronicles 20:21-22

There are some interesting facts about some of the characters in this story. In 2 Chronicles 2:14 it is recorded that Jahaziel, the man who gave the victorious prophecy, was a Levite and a descendant of Asaph. Asaph was one of the Chief Musicians appointed by the Levites to lead the procession before the ark of the covenant when it was carried to Jerusalem from the house of Obed-Edom (1 Chronicles 15:17). He was later employed for worship at the temple of Solomon and his sons were under his direction to “prophesy according to the order of the king” (1 Chronicles 25:1-2). Asaph is also credited as one of the contributors to the book of Psalms. Prophecy was not a new thing to Jahaziel; it was in his lineage.

The name Jahaziel means “beheld of God.” The Hebrew words which make up the name Jahaziel mean that God had his eye on him or that God was looking in his direction. There is one part of Jahaziel’s prophesy that is particularly interesting. He said, *You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you...* (2 Chronicles 20:17)

Twice in this verse God assured Judah that he was with them; that his presence would go before them to engage the enemy on their behalf. In the book of Psalms we find evidence of what happens to the enemies of the Lord when confronted with the presence of God. David wrote, *When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence.* (Psalm 9:3) *As smoke is driven away so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.* (Psalm 68:2)

The Hebrew word for presence used in these two scripture passages is *panyim*. *Panyim* means the face, as the part that turns. God prophesied that his presence would be with Judah; that his face would be turned in their direction. He prophesied it through a man whose name meant just that; Jahaziel.

Once Jahaziel had concluded the prophecy, Jehoshaphat and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the Lord in worship. *Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with voices loud and high.* (2 Chronicles 20:19)

The Kohathites were the Levites in charge of transporting the ark of the covenant (1 Chronicles 15). Above the Ark of the Covenant on the mercy seat was the place where God’s manifest presence rested. The Korahites were gatekeepers. The King James Version uses the word porters. The Hebrew word for porter means janitor. They stood guard at every gate of the temple and were on duty within the temple in their regular courses. They were in charge of the work of service (1 Chronicle 9:19; 1 Chronicles 26; 2 Chronicles 8:35).

The Kohathites were the bearers of the manifest presence of God. The Korahites were the protectors of the manifest presence of God. These Levites were among the first to enter the high praises of God. God used worshipers to prophesy and bring about the eventual defeat of his enemies.

It is the manifest presence of God, however, that puts the enemy to flight. Few things get the attention of God quicker than praise and worship. We need only to position ourselves in praise and stand still to behold his salvation. I’m speaking here of more than just our expressions of praise and worship; rather a lifestyle of praise and worship.

The Amplified Bible renders 2 Chronicles 20:21 this way: *When he (Jehoshaphat) had consulted with the people, he appointed singers to sing to the Lord and praise Him in their holy [priestly] garments...* It isn’t the expressions of our worship alone that brings the presence of God. It isn’t how loud we shout or how low we bow. It is the bringing of our offering clothed in our priestly garments of holiness. Psalm 29:2 says, *Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.* In other words worship the Lord decorated with sanctity. A life of worship is one that is decorated in holiness. That is the worship that draws the presence of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal(fleshly) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought in to captivity to the obedience of Christ...* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) Ephesians 6:11-12 reads, *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly (high) places.* The high praises of God go beyond our intellect. They do not come from our mind or the flesh but from the Holy Spirit. It takes “high” things to bring down “high” things. The high praises of God are lethal against every high thing that exalts itself against God.

Is there a time for the church to address the demonic? Certainly. We have Jesus as our example. Jesus spoke to Satan and his demons when they manifested. He rebuked them, bound them and sent them on their way. No where do we read where Jesus addressed Satan or demons without first there was some form of manifestation. He spent very little time even speaking of Satan.

Satan is not omnipresent. He is not everywhere all the time. Yet, the church seems to spend a lot of time shouting at him. I’m not sure that he hears much of what we say. However, he does have a seemingly organized constituency that exists to grant his every wish. When they manifest the church should deal with them as Jesus did. Otherwise our focus should be on the Father.

I am not convinced that any amount of shouting at Satan or demons, apart from a manifestation, will do much harm to the kingdom of darkness. But, I do know that if the church arms herself with high praises and the word of God, that God himself will shake the kingdom of darkness and bring its plans to

ruin. In fact Jesus has already bound Satan. All that's left for the church to do is to take back what Satan has stolen.

In Psalm 149 the psalmist stated that rendering judgment on the kingdoms of this world was an honor bestowed on the saints. As the saints of God (144,000) sing the high praises they will release the power of God to execute the demise of the kingdoms of darkness and its worshipers. When we position ourselves as people of praise, decorated in God's holiness, we will only have to address the enemy when he manifests. This will free us to spend most of our time addressing the Father. He will make sure the enemy gets the message.

John witnessed the preaching of the gospel and the proclamation of judgment on those who worship the beast. He also heard the pronouncement of the fall of Babylon. Babylon represents the city or the kingdom of the beast. It is an evil world system that has aligned itself with a false religious system. The fall of Babylon led to the singing of another song in heaven. In Revelation 15 John shares his vision of another group of worshipers singing the awesome acts of God.

And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all the nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.

Revelation 15:2-4

The only description of these worshipers in this passage is that they have the victory over the beast and everything associated with it. The beast is introduced in chapter thirteen of the Revelation and was given power by the dragon who is Satan. It was also given authority to make war with the saints and overcome them. In my opinion the beast represents a false religious system or kingdom put in place by Satan to deceive man and if possible even God's elect (Mark 13:22).

While many people are looking for one man who will someday rule as the "anti-christ" or the beast, humanism and "anti-christ" religions have invaded our society as well as the church. The number of the beast (666) represents man in his worst state. The number six is the number of man as he was created on the sixth day. Three sixes represent the total depravity of man much like the trinity (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) represents the totality of God. Man apart from God is saturated with self and is a citizen of Babylon. Apart from God, man has set himself to be worshiped as God in the temple of God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

There is, however, a multitude of people who have not bought in to what this world has to offer. They have taken seriously the command of God to come out from this world and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:17). They have overcome temptation and have been faithful through tribulation. They have persevered through persecution and have kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12). These are the saints of God who have not bowed their knee to worship the beast. They have taken up their cross daily by crucifying the flesh and have become victorious over the works of darkness. These are the true worshipers of God who sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Revelation 12:11 describes them this way; *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

Why is this song titled the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb? We begin to answer that question by looking at the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

God's people were in slavery to a dark kingdom. They had been oppressed for hundreds of years by an evil task master. In time God heard their prayers for deliverance and sent a man to act as a deliverer. By many signs and wonders God delivered his people from bondage then drowned the oppressor's army in the Red Sea.

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

Exodus 15:1-2

The song continues to praise God for his mighty power, his just ways and his holiness. In essence the song of Moses is one of praise for the deliverance of his people from bondage.

Before Moses died he sang another song. It is recorded in Deuteronomy 32. In the first part of the song Moses sang, *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.* These words are similar to the words of the song in Revelation 15. Moses ends the song with a prophetic utterance about the future deliverance of God's people. *Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of his servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.* (Deuteronomy 32:43)

As we have discussed, in chapter 5 of Revelations Jesus is introduced as the kinsman-redeemer. By his blood he purchased his people. He brought them out of bondage and set them free from the grip of the task master called sin and death. He gained for them an inheritance and presented them to his Father as kings and priests. It was the blood of a lamb that caused the death angel to pass over Israel in Egypt. It is the blood of the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. It was Jesus, the Lamb, who fulfilled Moses' prophetic song.

The song of the Lamb is coupled with the song of Moses because it too is one of deliverance. In fact much of the worship in John's vision of heaven is centered on the Lamb and the deliverance he accomplished by his blood.

...Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

Revelation 5:12

...Blessing and honor and glory and power be to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever!

Revelation 5:13

1 Peter 2:9 reads, *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who brought you out of darkness into His marvelous light...* We enter heaven's worship as we proclaim the praises of the Lamb in recognition of the great deliverance wrought by his blood.

As we have seen, the power of God anointed song can be used to bring the message of salvation to the lost; break the chains of those who are imprisoned in the dungeon of sin and death. Song can be used as a weapon of warfare to thwart the plans of the enemy and bring victory to God's people. It can also be used to intercede and petition the Father as well as pronounce God's prophetic word to his people. Song can also be used to bring about the healing of physical and spiritual barrenness.

There is one aspect of the worship John witnessed in heaven that we would be amiss to neglect. Heaven's worship is **loud**. No where in the Revelation do you read where anyone silently worshiped. According to John's account the worship was so loud at times it would have been difficult to hear anything else. At times the volume of worship was determined by the sheer number of worshipers. However, most of the time, we find that the worshipers were worshiping loudly.

Before we get too far into this let me qualify the thoughts I want to convey. First of all, I don't believe that the volume of worship determines the sincerity of worship. Loud worship is only noise if the worshiper doesn't have a heart after God. Secondly, I don't believe all worship has to be loud to be genuine worship. The Holy Spirit determines the "mood" of worship and sometimes a low key approach to the Father is on the menu. However, I do believe that worship is active and not passive. In other words true worshipers are participators not spectators. It's one thing to watch the game from the bleachers it's another thing to suit up and play.

The fact that heaven's worship is loud is most significant in the fact that the worshipers were actively involved in the exaltation of the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb. Early on in the Revelation we read of the elders playing harps, bowing and singing praise to the Lamb. In chapter 5 we read, *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around throne, the living creatures, 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 who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!* (Revelation 5:11-12)

When we look at worship in the Revelation we are hard pressed to find an example of quiet or silent worship. Let's read about some of the heavenly worship services.

After these things I looked and behold a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen!"

Revelation 7:9-12

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders...

Revelation 14:2-3

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!

Revelation 19:1

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

Revelation 19:6

The Greek word translated loud in these verses is the word *meas* which means big or exceedingly great. We often use the word mega when describing something of great proportions.

John shared that he heard the voice of a great multitude as the sound of many waters. Every time I read this passage Niagara Falls comes to my mind. Some authorities say that an estimated 1,000,000 gallons of water flow over the falls per minute. That is the equivalent of about 834,000,000 pounds. Scientists say that every frequency in the sound spectrum can be heard simultaneously as the water crashes at the bottom of the falls. The phenomenon is called white noise. I believe this is what John describes in his revelation.

There is no such thing as passive worship. Worship requires action; it is not a spectator sport. The word worship itself demands an active response. In the Old Testament the most common Hebrew word translated for worship is *shachah*. This word means to depress or prostrate in homage or loyalty to God, to bow down or fall down flat. The most common Greek word for worship is *proskuneo*. I shared earlier that this word means to kiss like a dog licking his master's hand, to fawn or crouch, to prostrate oneself in homage, to reverence or adore. This Greek word is translated worship throughout the Revelation.

One who silently stands each Sunday with folded arms watching the band or listening to the choir has not entered into worship. One who does not worship has not yet had a revelation of the One who sits on the throne and of the Lamb. When true revelation comes worship follows; it is a natural response.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray that God's kingdom would come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We can conclude that God's will is being done in heaven and that the worship taking place there is acceptable to him.

Worship is essential in ushering in the return of Christ. As I shared earlier, I believe that as Jesus, the Lamb of God, is given the rightful place of worship among God's people that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. As the kingdoms of this world crumble we grow closer to hearing the words; *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.* (Revelation 19:7) The bride, the Lamb's wife, has made herself ready by washing herself clean in his blood and putting on the garment of praise.

The good news is that in the future we will gather around God's throne with the four living creatures, the elders, multitude of angels and myriads of others to worship our King. The great news is we don't have to wait until the sweet by and by; we can experience heaven's worship and the manifest presence of

God today. Let God's people on earth join the host of heaven and worship the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb. Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus.

A Revelation of Worship

Study Guide

Chapter 1

The Revelation of the Four Living Creatures

1. What does John describe in chapter 4? (page 6)
2. What is the number three often used to signify in scripture? (page 6)
3. What is the Greek word used for holy in Revelation 4:8 and what does it mean? (page 6)
4. Who encountered a burning bush that was not consumed? (page 6)
5. What is one attribute that entitles God to be worshiped? (page 6)
6. What does God expect from his worshipers? (page 6)
7. What is one thing we must do to enter heaven's worship? (page 7)
8. What is the Greek word used for Lord and what does it mean? (page 7)
9. How is Jesus revealed in Revelation 19:11-16? (page 7)
10. What name is written on the robe and thigh of the rider on the white horse? (page 7)
11. To enter heaven's worship, how must we respond to the revelation of Almighty God? (page 7)
12. What does Jehovah mean? (page 7)
13. How does God reveal himself in Revelation 1:8? (page 8)
14. To what three things are we called? (page 8)

Chapter 2

The Revelation of the Twenty-Four Elders

1. Who was sitting on the twenty-four thrones? (page 9)
2. How many times in the Revelation is it mentioned that the twenty-four elders fall down and worship? (page 9)
3. What is the first position an elder should hold? (page 9)
4. What is the Greek word used for worship in Revelation 4:10 and what does it mean? (page 9)
5. What is another act performed by the twenty-four elders? (page 9)
6. Who were crowns given to in ancient times? (page 9)
7. Name three crowns mentioned in scripture. (page 10)

8. How many crowns was the rider on the white horse wearing in Revelation 19:12? (page 10)
9. What revelation must we have to enter heaven's worship? (page 10)
10. By what are we now seated with God in the heavenly places? (page 10)
11. By what have we been given access to the throne room? (page 10)
12. What divine revelation were the twenty-four elders given? (page 10)
13. How many times in the Revelation is it stated that God is worthy to receive glory, honor and power? (page 11)
14. What is the meaning of the Greek word used for created in Revelation 4:11? (page 11)
15. What scripture gives the command for all creation to give praise to God? (page 11)

Chapter 3

The Revelation of the Lamb

1. What does John see standing in the midst of the throne? (page 12)
2. As what did John identify Jesus? (page 12)
3. What did the bread and wine represent which Jesus offered at his last Passover? (page 13)
4. What was used for the proof of transaction when a Jewish family sold their land? (page 13)
5. What did the open scroll state? (page 13)
6. What did the sealed scroll contain? (page 13)
7. What were the two ways a Jewish family could regain possession of their sold land? (page 13)
8. What biblical story portrays the law of the kinsman-redeemer? (page 13)
9. In what book do we find evidence of the sealed and open scrolls? (page 13)
10. As what did the Lamb establish himself by opening the sealed scroll? (page 13)
11. What was the price the Lamb paid for redemption? (page 13)
12. How did Jesus become the object of heaven's worship? (page 13)
13. Who did John hear giving glory to the Lamb? (page 14)
14. What must become a reality in our lives if we are to enter heaven's worship? (page 14)
15. Of what is the Revelation of Jesus Christ a glorious portrayal? (page 14)
16. What two things stand out about the multitude of people mentioned in Revelation 7:9-10? (page 14)
17. What does the Greek word for salvation mean in Revelation 7:10? (page 14)

18. For what were palm branches used in ancient times? (page 14)
19. Through what did Jesus win a decisive victory over the enemy? (page 15)
20. By what did Jesus conquer sin and seal the fate of death? (page 15)

Chapter 4

The Revelation of the Great Multitude

1. From where did the elder tell John the great multitude had come? (page 16)
2. Where in scripture is the phrase “seven year tribulation period” found? (page 16)
3. From where does the idea of a seven year tribulation period derive? (page 16)
4. What did Jesus promise us in John 16:33? (page 17)
5. What is the meaning of the Greek words used for tribulation in Revelation 7:13-14? (page 17)
6. Did Jesus suffer tribulation during his earthly ministry? (page 17)
7. What did Paul and Barnabas preach to the converts Lystra, Iconium and Antioch? (page 17)
8. Where were Paul and Silas thrown in jail? (page 17)
9. What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight? (page 17)
10. What happened when the earthquake shook the foundation of the prison? (page 17)
11. What happens when we worship in the midst of tribulation? (page 18)
12. What do many scholars believe about the *Songs of Ascent*? (page 18)
13. To where does worship elevate us? (page 18)
14. How do we see our circumstances when we are in God’s presence? (page 18)
15. What is the Hebrew word used for rejoice in Habakkuk 3:18? (page 18)
16. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word *guwl*? (page 18)
17. How did Habakkuk worship God? (page 18)
18. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word for barren in Isaiah 54:1? (page 18)
19. What did Jesus tell us in John 7:38? (page 19)
20. Why has song been given to God’s people? (page 19)
21. From what are true worshipers born? (page 19)
22. When is worship perfected? (page 19)

23. What does God work in our circumstances? (page 19)

Chapter 5

The Revelation of the Mount Zion

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2. Who did Peter and Paul quote in their letters to establish that Jesus was the redeemer that God had raised up in Zion? (page 20)
3. According to Psalm 78:68, what tribe did God choose? (page 20)
4. To what does the psalmist equate with the tribe of Judah? (page 20)
5. What does Judah mean? (page 20)
6. From what tribe did the Messiah emerge? (page 20)
7. What was Mount Zion? (page 21)
8. By what name was Zion also known? (page 21)
9. What did the Ark of the Covenant represent? (page 21)
10. Who captured the Ark of the Covenant before David captured Jerusalem? (page 21)
11. What happened during David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem? (page 21)
12. Where was the ark placed when it was brought to Mount Zion? (page 21)
13. What did David establish once the ark was placed in the tent? (page 21)
14. Who was David's Music Master? (page 21)
15. Who was appointed as the Chief Musicians/Singers? (page 21)
16. What was the ministry of the Levites? (page 21)
17. How many skilled musicians were appointed to minister at the tabernacle of David? (page 21)
18. How many addition musicians were appointed to minister at the tabernacle of David? (page 21)
19. What do Mount Zion and the tabernacle of David represent today? (page 22)
20. What is the habitation of God today? (page 22)
21. What ministry did Jesus fulfill while on earth? (page 22)
22. What three things did Jesus do to restore kingdom order? (page 22)
23. What did Amos write was the purpose of the restoration of David's tabernacle? (page 22)
24. What is the Hebrew word used for posses in Amos 9:12 and what does it mean? (page 22)

25. What would a Hebrew land owner do upon selling his property and what did it represent? (page 22)
26. What responsibility did God give to Adam? (page 22)
27. What did Adam's failure allow? (page 22)
28. What did Jesus do by his death? (page 23)
29. What happens when we magnify Jesus? (page 23)
30. What will happen when the church learns to flow in proper kingdom worship and authority? (page 23)

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The Revelation of the 144,000

1. What power was given to the four angels standing at the four corners of the earth? (page 24)
2. What was the number of servants that were sealed? (page 24)
3. What tribe is listed first in Revelation 7? (page 25)
4. What two tribes are not listed in Revelation 7? (page 25)
5. What was Paul's definition of a Jew? (page 25)
6. Who is the true Israel of God? (page 25)
7. Whose mark did the 144,000 have on their foreheads? (page 25)
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9. With what had the 144,000 washed their robes? (page 25)
10. What mandate are true worshipers given? (page 26)
11. By who is the believer sealed? (page 26)
12. In the case of a nation, what is the biblical definition of a virgin? (page 26)
13. What did God command Israel throughout the Old Testament? (page 27)
14. Speaking through Jeremiah, of what two evils did God accuse Israel? (page 27)
15. How do true worshipers become virgins? (page 27)
16. What is required of those who desire to follow Jesus? (page 27)
17. What is one meaning of the cross in the life of Jesus? (page 27)
18. What compelled Jesus to be obedient to the Father? (page 28)
19. What was the sacrifice for sin? (page 28)

20. What is a motivating force in the life of a true worshiper? (page 28)
21. What does it mean for a true worshiper to abandon his life for the Father? (page 28)
22. What has a life of worship deserted? (page 28)
23. To what have those who follow the Lamb died? (page 28)
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25. What must one do to follow the Lamb? (page 29)
26. What does abandoned mean when used in the adjective form? (page 29)
27. What does it mean to worship with abandonment? (page 29)
28. What is the only way one can be redeemed? (page 29)
29. What is the first step in becoming a true worshiper? (page 30)
30. What other names were given to the Feast of Harvest? (page 30)
31. How did Paul refer to the early converts? (page 30)
32. How did James portray all believers? (page 30)
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34. What does the Greek word for deceit mean in Revelation 14:5? (page 30)
35. What is one biblical example of misrepresentation or deception? (page 30)
36. To what can a deceitful tongue be traced? (page 31)
37. From what should true worshipers keep themselves? (page 31)
38. What does the Greek word for fault mean in Revelation 14:5? (page 31)
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4. What is the only way a new song comes forth? (page 32)
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6. What is the Hebrew word for praise which is most associated with the new song? (page 33)
7. As what is the Book of Psalms also known? (page 33)
8. What is the higher dimension of worship where God desires for true worshipers to occupy? (page 33)
9. What is the Greek word Paul uses for hymn? What does it mean? (page 34)
10. What is the definition of a psalm? (page 34)
11. For what can the new song be used as a tool? (page 34)
12. What does the word Judah mean? (page 34)
13. With what does the new song of praise seem to have direct connection? (page 34)
14. For what is the new song used as a weapon? (page 34)
15. What are the two levels of the spirit world mentioned in Psalm 149:5-9? (page 35)
16. What is one of our weapons against the two levels of the spirit world? (page 35)
17. What is the higher place of warfare where God wants his people involved? (page 35)
18. Who prophesied God's victory for Judah over their enemies? (page 35)
19. What does the name Jahaziel mean? (page 36)
20. What does the Hebrew word panyim mean? (page 36)
21. What did Jehoshaphat and all Jerusalem do when Jahaziel concluded his prophecy? (page 36)
22. Who were the Levites in charge of transporting the ark of the covenant? (page 36)
23. What were the duties of the Korahites? (page 36)
24. Who did God use to bring about the eventual defeat of Judah and Jerusalem's enemies? (page 36)
25. What put the enemy to flight? (page 36)
26. Against what are the high praises of God lethal? (page 36)
27. According to Psalm 149, what is the honor bestowed on all the saints? (page 37)
28. What does Babylon represent in the Revelation of Jesus Christ? (page 37)
29. What does the beast represent in the Revelation of Jesus Christ? (page 37)
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34. What is the significance of heaven's worship being loud? (page 38)
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Through Justworship.com Pastor Steve, as he is known on the web, has reached an international audience. His worship related articles appear on web sites originating in Germany and Australia, as well as the United States. He has also written worship songs that are being sung in churches in the United States, Azerbaijan, Norway and New Zealand. Steve's three books and 40 day devotional have been downloaded in 158 countries and territories.