

Worship in Revelation

PART 5 • ETERNAL • REVELATION 5:13-14

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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It is a good to be together with you this morning! As usual, I hope all of you have the elements for the Lord's Supper, as John/Aaron will be leading us in the prayers for the Supper right after we study together this morning. And then, Clayton/Chris will be leading in several songs before we dismiss [for class]. If you are visiting with us today, we invite you to fill out a virtual visitor card, using the QR code on the wall up here. You should be able to open the camera on your phone, point it at the image up here, and it will take you to a very brief form on our website: fourlakescoc.org/visitor. The code is also on the bulletin board and in the bulletin itself. And if you are not able to do this online, we do have some visitor cards on actual paper back by the elements for the Lord's Supper in the entryway.

As we begin, we want to make sure we at least briefly summarize God's plan of salvation. We know that we have sinned, but thankfully, God provided a way for us to come back. He sent his only Son to this earth to die for our sins, and in response, we believe the good news, we turn away from sin, we publicly confess our belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and then we allow ourselves to be immersed with the Lord in the act of baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins.

And once again, we do have several examples this morning! The first comes to us from Barry Grider, who preaches for the Riverbend congregation in Dalton, Georgia. Several days ago, Barry posted online and he says, "Praise be to God for our new sister in Christ, Dawn Lloyd. After several studies with her beloved friend, Valorie Sanders, this evening Dawn confessed her faith in Jesus and was baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27). While she is suffering major health issues, tonight she can rest knowing that all is well with her soul. We rejoice with her." Barry then captions the picture on top, "Elder Ernie Sanders baptizing his employee and friend, Dawn Lloyd." And the picture on the bottom he captions, "Dawn Lloyd in the center of pic and friends who witnessed her baptism." So, we are thankful for Dawn's decision this week!

The next one comes to us from a friend, J.J. Hendrix, who works with the Northwest congregation down in Fort Worth, Texas. J.J. says, "Jerry Carver gave himself to Christ today being baptized for the forgiveness of his sins. Please welcome our new brother to the family of God and encourage him in his new life in Christ. Thanks to Cub Orcutt and the Azle congregation for allowing us to use their baptistry." So, we are also thankful for Jerry's decision this week, and we share this by way of reminder that we do have a baptistry downstairs. If you have

any questions, please pull me aside after worship, or talk to John or Aaron, as our contact information is always on the front of the bulletin, on the wall right inside the front door.

This morning, we are wrapping up our brief series of lessons where we are focusing on worship in Revelation 4-5. We are looking at a series of what might be described as “songs” or maybe “statements of praise” in these two chapters. The Lord Jesus introduces himself in Chapter 1, and after sending messages to the seven churches of Asia in Chapters 2-3, the Lord (in Revelation 4) invites John to step through an open door into heaven, which he does, stepping into God’s throne room. He immediately sees the four living creatures praising God continually, saying, ***“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”*** God, then, is ***“holy”*** in every way.

We then came to a second statement of praise, and the twenty-four elders join in on this one. They cast their crowns before the throne in worship, as they say, ***“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”*** We learned, then, that as our Creator, God is worthy of worship.

We then crossed over into Revelation 5, and we came to a third statement of praise, the first to be described as a ***“song.”*** We see John weeping at the scroll with seven seals, because no one can be found to open it, until we are introduced to Jesus as the Lamb of God. At this point, we see our prayers (pictured as incense) ascend before the throne. So, we are included in this one, as the elders and the four living creatures sing a “new song.”

And last week, we saw the angels join in – myriads and myriads of angels, thousands of thousands, millions upon millions – and these angels praise the Lamb as being worthy of power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

And with this, we come to the end, to the last of these statements of praise in these two chapters. We come, this morning, to Revelation 5:13-14. I hope you can follow along in your own copy of the Bible. We will put the text on the wall up here in just a moment, but here in the last two verses of Revelation 5, we come to the end of this “crescendo of praise.” We’ve also described this as an “avalanche of praise,” as more and more groups join in on this worship in heaven – it starts with the four living creatures, then the elders join in, then the angels, and today we come to what we might describe as the “grand finale,” as all of creation joins in, but it is a finale that keeps on going! So, let’s look together at Revelation 5:13-14, the words of the apostle John in Revelation 5:13-14,

¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” ¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

As we look at this final example of worship in Revelation 4-5, as we have done over the past several weeks, I’d like to divide our thoughts into two basic categories, starting with what John SEES on this occasion (what is happening here, the setting), and then we will move along to what John HEARS around the throne (the statement of praise).

I. But we start with what he SEES on this occasion.

And what he sees comes at the beginning of verse 13, as he notices that all of creation is now joining in – ***“every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea.”*** Thinking in terms of photography, John breaks out the wide-angle lens here, doesn’t he? He zooms out. I think back to working as a photographer back in college, and I remember making my own “fish-eye” lens, just messing around one day. I got a peephole like you would install in your front door, to see who’s at the door, I drilled a hole in a lens cap, and with a bit of glue, I had a lens that could capture an extremely wide angle. Like looking out the peephole in the door of your hotel room, I could take a picture of my entire dorm room at once. I think I could see my own feet, and the ceiling light, and most of the rest of the whole room. So, in my mind, that’s what John is doing here. It’s almost too much to take in. We have the four living creatures, and the elders, our prayers are there (pictured as incense), and then the angels, and now, everything in all of creation, joins in, worshiping God! ***“Every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea.”*** The living and the dead, on earth and on the sea – everything joins in, all of creation.

We think of what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:9-11, ***“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** At this point, then, John is perhaps surrounded by praise, in all directions, as far as the eye can see. And this is where we remember that in his own physical reality, John is all alone, isn’t he? He is imprisoned on the Roman prison island of Patmos, completely cut off from his Christian family. But in this behind-the-scenes reality, John is really not alone at all. And this is a good reminder for us. Some of you are joining us online this morning, others are joining us on the phone, and some of you have not been able to be here in person for more than a year and a half now, since March 2020. So, this is a good reminder: When we worship (whether we are all alone or with a small congregation meeting together in Wisconsin’s capital city), we are joining in on this praise that is happening continually in heaven! When we worship, we join with the four living creatures, the elders, the angels, and all of creation. When we worship, we are never truly alone.

And this is where I should probably just mention the word ***“worship”*** down at the end of verse 14, as John sees the elders fall down in ***“worship.”*** The word is something of a compound word, meaning “to kiss toward,” and it’s the idea of bowing before a king or a ruler of some kind, where someone would maybe kiss their hand as they motion before the throne. Today, we think about “throwing a kiss.” I don’t know whether I’ve thrown a kiss for a while. Maybe you do this all the time. But that’s the basic idea. It is a gesture of love and respect, with the idea of extreme reverence – bowing before and paying homage to someone greater. These creatures are worshiping. When we worship, like these elders, we fall down before the throne of God. We are undignified, falling down on our hands and knees before the Lord – sometimes literally, but primarily in our attitude. God is God, and we are not, and we come before him in worship, alongside all of creation.

So, this is the grand finale of the crescendo, as all of creation joins in on this worship. This is a continuation of this “avalanche of praise” we’ve been studying the past few weeks. The question is: Will we worship willingly now, in this life, or will we wait until we have no choice?

Hopefully, we choose to worship now. And if we might be tempted to think that worship is boring or unimportant, maybe we could think about it like attending a big game. It’s not a perfect comparison, especially coming from me, but I hope we understand the illustration. Some of you love going to Lambeau Field, or the Kohl Center, or Camp Randall Stadium. You plan for it, you look forward to it, you get there early, maybe you

paint the big “G” on your chest, and when we get to an event like that, we are fully engaged in what’s going on. If something happens in the outside world during those two hours, we really do not care, because we are fully and only aware of what we are doing in the moment. When we worship, we are joining in on this behind-the-scenes reality, and we are fully engaged.

So, this is what John observes around the throne: Every created thing joins in on this worship in heaven.

II. This brings us to what John HEARS, as he hears WHAT ALL OF CREATION IS SAYING.

At the end of verse 13, ***“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”*** A few things to note here, starting with the reminder that this statement of praise is addressed ***“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”*** So again, we have the reminder that both the Father and the Son are equally deserving of praise. We’ve had this same reminder several times in this series. Some have suggested that Jesus is a created being, that Jesus is simply a messenger, a prophet, or perhaps one of the angels, but that is not the case at all. Unlike angels, the Lamb of God is worthy of praise, in the same way that the One who sits on the throne is worthy of praise. Jesus is God. We see this in John 1:1, ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*** And just a few verses later, John says, ***“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** Jesus is the Word, and the Word was God. Jesus, therefore, is God. And so, the worship in verse 13, then, is directed simultaneously toward both the Father and the Son. Both are worthy of our worship.

Another part of this is that this worship will continue for eternity, because both the Father and the Son are worthy ***“forever and ever.”*** Unlike the Roman Caesars who only ruled a few months or years before dying or getting assassinated, and unlike our own rulers who either get re-elected or thrown out of office every 2, 4, or 6 years, the Lord God will reign ***“forever and ever.”*** And so in this sense, worship is eternal. Everything around us seems to change – we change, our families change, jobs change, technology changes, weather changes, government changes, but the Lord God will reign ***“forever and ever.”*** Worship is eternal.

As to what is said, all of creation says ***“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”*** Last week, we had the seven statements of praise. Now we have four. ***“Blessing”*** is that word we would recognize today in the word “eulogy,” literally, a “good word.” God is worthy of having good words spoken to him and about him. ***“Honor,”*** once again, is the idea of putting a value on someone or something. In worship, we are telling God and the world around us that God is valuable to us. ***“Glory”*** is the idea of having a good opinion about somebody, sometimes translated as “approval” or “praise.” And ***“dominion”*** is the idea of “strength” or “might,” the ability to do things. Every created thing, then, praises the Lamb and the One who sits on the throne – to Him be eternal ***“blessing,”*** eternal ***“honor,”*** eternal ***“glory,”*** and eternal ***“dominion.”***

At the end of this passage, ***“...the four living creatures kept saying, ‘AMEN.’”*** The word ***“AMEN”*** is one of very few almost universal words. Nearly all cultures have some form of the word ***“AMEN.”*** In that sense, it’s like the word “hallelujah,” or the word “okay,” or even “Coca-Cola.” These are words that most cultures would recognize. Well, ***“AMEN”*** is also used around the world, and it’s a bit unusual, because it hasn’t been translated, but it has been transliterated. In other words, we don’t convert it into English with its meaning, but we take it letter by letter, assigning an English letter to each Hebrew letter in the word, similar to what we’ve done with the word “baptism.” We usually don’t translate the word “baptism,” but we used the Greek letters to create a

new word in English. In a similar way, **“AMEN”** is not an English word, but it is a universal word, and it means, “truly,” “So be it,” or even, “Make it happen.” It is a statement of acknowledgement, agreement, approval, or affirmation. We might think of what happens during campaign season when we hear a commercial, and at the end, the candidate comes on and says, “My name is so-and-so, and I approve of this message.” That is the meaning of the word, **“AMEN”** – I approve, I endorse. But not only that, it also carries the idea that I will work to make sure this statement comes to pass. I think of Captain Picard on Star Trek and how he used to say, “Make it so!” He very well could have used the word **“AMEN.”** As far as I can tell, the word is found roughly 129 times in the Bible. When Jesus says, **“Truly, truly, I say to you,”** he is literally saying, “Amen, Amen,” this statement I am making is the absolute truth, it’s so true I can say **“AMEN”** before the statement, you can trust what I am about to say. As I’ve mentioned several times through the years, when our kids were little, we taught them that when we pray as a family, when they say “amen” after the prayer, they are saying, “That prayer is my prayer, too,” that we are sharing a prayer; we are agreeing with the prayer. Well, when the four living creatures hear all of creation worship, when they hear everything that has been said in these two chapters, their summary of everything is **“AMEN,”** let it be, make it so; we agree with everything that has been said here, we approve of this message.

Conclusion:

John, then, steps through this open door into heaven. In Revelation 4, he sees God praised as being HOLY and as being our CREATOR. In Revelation 5, the focus shifts to Jesus who appears as a LAMB. He is praised for being qualified to open the seals, he is praised as being the LAMB OF GOD, and today we learn that all of creation joins in as this praise continues throughout ETERNITY. The Lamb is worthy of our worship.

And that seems to be the point of these two chapters: Worship is important! I know most of us probably love being told that we are appreciated. We do something, and somebody says, “Thank you.” That feels good, doesn’t it? As I understand it, that’s basically what worship is: We are acknowledging God, thanking him for what he has done for us. He made us, and when we sinned, he sent his only Son to purchase our freedom from sin. And in response, we worship. We tell God how awesome he is! It is our privilege, our responsibility, our honor to worship the Lamb of God and the One who sits on the throne. And when we worship, we join in on this behind-the-scenes reality. No matter what is happening around us, even if we feel cut off and alone, we are not, but as we sing and as we pray, we worship alongside the four living creatures, the elders, the angels, and all of creation – if we see Him as being worthy.

This is a message we need to hear. It was a message the early Christians needed to hear. And it comes early in the book, to prepare them for what comes next. Over the next several chapters, as those seven seals are opened, God pours out his judgment on the Roman Empire on those who were persecuting the church. But this sets the stage. The Father and the Lamb are worthy, and they are able. And I hope this is something we understand after studying these two chapters. No matter what happens around us: God is worthy of our worship. This morning, then, I hope we will sing and pray with fear and with enthusiasm, as if we are in the presence of God, because we are. And I hope this allows us rethink life as being centered around the throne of God, because it truly is. Everything points to Jesus. He is worthy.

As we close our study, let’s go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are our awesome and merciful Father. In every possible way, you are worthy of our worship and adoration. You deserve our love and obedience. You have taught us how to live, but we often fall short. We try, but we often slip and fall into sin. We pray for your continued patience and mercy, but we also ask for strength to maintain the struggle. We pray for your help as we live the lives that you want us to live. We pray that we would be able to see Jesus for who he really is, the Lamb that was slain so that our sins can be forgiven. We are eternally thankful.

We love you, Father, and we come to you this morning in the name of your Son, Jesus, who gave his life for us. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com