

WORSHIP

The Christian's Highest Occupation

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP: "IN Spirit AND IN TRUTH"

6. The Revelation of the Son of God (John 4:20-24)

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:20-24)

Our Lord's own teaching on the subject of worship, which is recorded in John 4:20-24, is of momentous importance to every believer.

It seems strange that this great subject of worship was discussed with a fallen woman by a wayside well; while the subject of the new birth was propounded to a religious, moral and sincere Pharisee. We would have reversed the order of procedure, but not so our Lord. In His infinite wisdom He, "**Who doeth all things well,**" revealed these wonderful truths to a poor sinner who needed Him. In His conversation with the woman at the well, Christ, in view of His sufferings and the glory that should follow, introduced at least seven great changes regarding worship, as it had previously been revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

(1) *As to the place of worship* (vs. 20)

This woman, though anything but chaste, was not unwilling to discuss religion and said to the Lord: "**Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, [Gerizim] and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.**"

Note carefully Christ's answer: "**Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in the mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father**" (v. 21).

In other words, worship was no longer to be confined to any definite place on earth and, least of all, to any building erected by man on earth, however great its historic interest, however beautiful its architectural design, or however ornate the pomp and circumstance of its ritual.

Though both the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the temple in Jerusalem, had been erected by Divine command, and their services inaugurated by a demonstration of God's approval in the descending cloud of glory; yet God has done away with both; for they were but "**figures**" and "**shadows,**" that awaited the advent of the incarnate Son of God (Exodus 40:34; I Kings 9:10-11; Hebrews 9:22-28).

After the Tabernacle had served its purpose as the "place" of worship for Israel, it was superseded by the temple, erected in Jerusalem, "**the place where God had chosen to put his name.**"

When Christ became incarnate and dwelt (literally, "tabernacled") among us, He fulfilled the type of the Tabernacle: "**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth**" (John 1:14).

But Christ also fulfilled the type of the Temple.

One day, the Jews challenged Him: "**What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?**" He replied: "**Destroy this temple, and, in three days, I will raise it up.**"

At this, the Jews, thinking in terms of Herod's Temple, which then stood in Jerusalem cried: "**Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?**" Now note the comment that follows: "**But he spake of the temple of his body**" (John 2:18-21).

Still later, faced by the unjust criticism of the Pharisees, who charged Him with doing unlawful things on the Sabbath day, Christ quoted David's act of eating the shew bread, and of the priests doing service on the Sabbath, and then added these tremendously significant words: "**But I say unto you that, in this place, is One greater than the temple**" (Matthew 12:1-8).

- All that the Temple stood for, in its provision of a way of approach to God by a Divinely appointed and accepted substitute, was all perfectly fulfilled in Him.
- All that the priesthood stood for, in its provision of a representative to present their worship to God, was fulfilled in Him who, as our great High Priest, not only became the acceptable Offering, but the accepted Offerer.

When, on the cross, He had completed all the work needed for our salvation, God rent the veil of the Temple from top to bottom, in the midst. By this act, He signified that both the Temple and the Levitical priesthood had served its purpose, and was now done away with in Christ.

This is the argument of Hebrews, chapter 7 to 10.

Worship is no longer a matter of "place," but of spiritual condition.

The believer is just as much at liberty to worship God from the midst of the wilds of Borneo, as from the heart of a nation's metropolis.

It matters not whether a Christian is in the kitchen, the barn, the bedroom, the busy mart, or the open air; he can worship God anywhere, providing, of course, he is in the spiritual condition to do so.

He needs no human intercessor to act as mediator, for he has in Heaven a great High Priest, and therefore can go directly to Him.

The Scriptures makes it so perfectly simple: **“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way . . . and having an high Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith”** (Hebrews 10:19-22). We have perfect liberty to march right in!

God no longer dwells in buildings made by man, as He did of old in the Tabernacle and the Temple. Paul, in his speech on Mars Hill makes this crystal clear: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

“The house of God,” today, is His people. He dwells in the midst of His gathered saints, wherever they may meet in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:20).

We are told in Hebrews 3:6, that **“Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we”**; and by “we” is meant Christians. Whether it be an individual Christian, or a small company of two or three, or a large gathering of believers; each may meet anywhere on earth and worship the Father and the Son.

The Christian’s “place of worship” is where his great High Priest is -- in Heaven. He enters there by faith, as he lays hold upon the two-fold provision he has in Christ:

First, His redemption work,
Second, His present ministry at the right hand of God.

(2) As to the Object of worship

“The true worshippers shall worship the Father” (vs. 23)

Israel worshipped the Lord God, Whose demonstrated holiness, majesty, glory, power and justice at Sinai, filled them with awe and terror. As they stood, trembling and afar off from the fearful spectacle, they said to Moses: **“Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die . . . and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was”** (Exodus 20:19-21).

Thus the Lord, at the giving of the law, which revealed the righteous requirements that His holiness demanded, is described as being at a distance, dwelling in darkness and producing dread within the hearts of the people of Israel.

Now compare this with Christ's revelation as to the Object of the Christian's worship.

It is "**the Father.**"

He is the same Being as the God of Sinai, for God is unchangeable in His character. He is equally as holy, righteous and just as He always was, and ever shall be; but He is now revealed, by His beloved Son, in a different aspect, even as "Father."

It is a word that connotes:

- Comforting nearness,
- Exquisite intimacy,
- Assuring dearness,
- Warm affection,
- Tender care,
- Enduring love,
- Understanding pity,
- Infinite forbearance
- Illimitable grace.

God has come forth from the enfolding clouds of darkness and, through "the Son of his love," stands revealed as the "**God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**" and of every true Christian who has been born into His family through faith in Christ. Creation could but unfold to us God's eternal power and wisdom: "**For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse**" (Romans 1:20).

The law could but reveal God's holiness, righteousness, justice and truth (Exodus 20:1-17).

But the Lord Jesus has exposed to us God's heart, a heart filled with infinite love towards those who are undeserving of the least of His mercies.

How good it is for the believer to be able to constantly remind himself that it is to his Father that he comes to present his worship, a Father who has been described as:

"Absolutely tender, absolutely true,
Understanding all things, understanding you;
Infinitely loving, exquisitely near,
This is God our Father -- what have we to fear?"

(3) As to the relationship of the worshipper

Since it is God, revealed as "the Father," whom we worship; it follows logically that only those who have been brought into living and vital relationship with Him, can call Him such and worship Him.

In the Old Testament, it was the children of Aaron, by natural generation, that were alone fitted to minister as priests in the worship of the Lord God.

In the New Testament, it is the children of God, by supernatural regeneration, that are alone constituted **“a kingdom of priests unto God”**: **“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”** (I Peter 2:5) and **“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”** (Revelation 1:5-6).

This is why the new birth is such an essential thing. By the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, the believer is made

- “Partakers of the Divine nature,”
- Is born into the family of God,
- Has the unspeakable privilege of calling God his Father.

No wonder John breaks forth in praise and joyously exclaims: **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!”** (I John 3:1) and Peter’s words: **“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”** (II Peter 1:4).

We have before noted that the natural man is not only dead in his trespasses and sins, but he can neither understand the things of God, nor does he desire to worship Him. He may be naturally possessed of a religious turn of mind, and even evidence a fair amount of morality and respectability, as did Nicodemus of old; but he must learn that: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

It is no longer, as in the case of Israel, the national worship of an earthly people that is in view; but rather the individual worship of God’s Heaven-born children, made such “by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:22).

James G. Deck, in his well known and greatly loved hymn, has beautifully stated this fact:

“Abba, Father, we approach Thee
In our Saviour’s precious name,
We, Thy children, here assembling,
Access to Thy presence claim.

From our guilt His blood hath washed us,
‘Tis through Him our souls draw nigh,
And Thy Spirit, too, hath taught us,
‘Abba, Father,’ thus to cry.”

(4) *As to the character of the worship*

It must be **“in Spirit and in truth”** (v. 24).

In other words, it must be spiritual and sincere.

Israel’s worship of the Lord God had been largely characterized by the visible and material.

It consisted largely in the offering of animal sacrifices, through the medium of a human priest, who was subject to disease, decay and death.

This has now given place to a spiritual worship, through the mediation of a Divine High Priest, who, by the “offering of himself to God,” has **“perfected forever them that are sanctified.”** Now risen and glorified, Christ lives **“in the power of an endless life,”** and thus has an **“unchangeable priesthood”**:

“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:23-27).

It is significant that, at the mock trial of our Lord, a most dramatic incident occurred.

The last high priest of an old and passing dispensation, which had been characterized by failure, looking into the eyes of the great High Priest of a new and coming dispensation, which was to be unfailing and unfading, and inquired: **“I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God.”**

Note Christ’s answer and its effect.

“Jesus saith unto him: ‘Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven!’”

At this plain and definite declaration, by our Lord, of His essential and eternal Deity, the high priest rent his clothes and cried: **“He hath spoken blasphemy”** (Matthew 26:57-68).

By the rending of his clothes, Caiaphas violated an express command of God. Though doubtless he knew it not, by this act he disqualified himself for the office he held!

God had given a distinct commandment as to this: **“And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes”** (Leviticus 21:10).

“And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled” (Leviticus 10:6) and **“And there was an hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of an habergeon, with a band round about the hole, that it should not rend”** (Exodus 39:23).

We have before noted that the Aaronic priesthood, with all its ornate ritual and its many sacrifices, came to an end at the cross.

The rent veil bears eloquent testimony to this fact.

That which had previously shut men out from the presence of God was done away through the sacrifice of Christ. We are told that **“but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”** (Hebrews 9:26). As Bonar has so beautifully put it:

“No blood, no altar now,
The sacrifice is o’er!
No flame, no smoke ascends on high,
The Lamb is slain no more.
But richer blood has flowed from nobler veins,
To purge the soul from guilt,
And cleanse the reddest stains.”

No longer is worship a thing of the hand, but of the heart. It no longer consists of an endless procession of lambs, heifers and bullocks, to be slain upon the blood-baptized altars of Jewry.

The Christian is now urged to **“offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”** (I Peter 2:5).

No longer do we need the mediation of the sons of Aaron, or the sons of anyone else!

Each believer is constituted a priest unto God, and Christ alone is the great High Priest. He it is Who presents the spiritual worship of His redeemed people to HIS Father, in all the virtue and value of His blessed Person and work.

Much of the so-called “public worship,” in Christendom, is merely a form of Christianized Judaism, and, in some cases, thinly veiled Paganism. This fact may easily be verified. One has only to compare the sacerdotalism that obtains in Christendom with the ritual of Judaism to be struck with the deadly parallel that exists between the two.

In Judaism there was a separate priestly caste who alone could conduct the worship of Israel. In Christendom a man-made priesthood, called “the clergy,” is essential to its worship, in spite of the plain teaching of the New Testament that all believers are priests. These priests of Judaism wore a distinctive dress, as also does the clergy.

Judaism emphasized an earthly sanctuary, or building. In like manner, Christendom makes much of its consecrated “places of worship,” and miscalls the edifice “a cathedral,” and refers to it as “the house of God.”

Jewish priests had an altar on which were offered sacrifices to God. Christendom has erected “altars” in these ornate buildings, before which candles burn and incense is offered and, in many cases, on which a wafer is kept, which is looked upon as the body of Christ!

It is hardly necessary to say that all this copying of Judaism is absolutely foreign to the teaching of the New Testament.

Thus Christendom has initiated its own specially educated and ordained priesthood, whose presence is indispensable to “administer the sacraments.”

These men, robed in gorgeous vestments, from within a roped off “sanctuary,” stand before a bloodless “alter,” with a background of burning candles, crosses and smoking incense, and “conduct the worship” for the laity.

With the use of an elaborate prepared ritual, with stereotyped prayers, and responses from the audience, the whole service proceeds smoothly and with mechanical precision. It is a marvel of human invention and ingenuity, with an undoubted appeal to the esthetic; but a tragic and sorry substitute for the spiritual worship which our Lord declared that His Father sought from His redeemed children.

Many years ago Alexander Hislop wrote a book entitled: “*The Two Babylons.*”

In this he proves quite conclusively that much of the ornate ritual of Roman Catholicism was borrowed from the idolatrous practices of ancient Babylon. This book is still obtainable for all who wish to be informed on this subject.

(5) *As to the time of worship*

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father” (John 4:23).

Israel’s worship of God, as we have already seen in the feasts of the Lord, was confined largely to stated occasions and places. Then again, the Sabbath day loomed large on the horizon of their worship. Our Lord here makes clear that worship is no longer a matter of “days, and months, and times, and years;” for these things belong to the past dispensation of the law. (Galatians 4:10).

The New Testament knows of no “holy” days, which calls for more sanctity than other days.

The Sabbath, or the seventh day, belongs to Israel, and was a sign of God’s covenant with it as a nation: **“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you”** (Exodus 31:13).

The Lord's day, or the first day of the week, belongs to the Christian dispensation. It is **“the day which the Lord hath made,”** and which commemorates the time when God took the Stone **“which the builders rejected, and made it the headstone of the corner.”** (See Psalm 118:22-24; cp. Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10).

Worship is no longer limited to any day of the week, or even to any time of the day. We discover from Acts 20:7 that it was the custom of the early Church to meet together for the breaking of bread on “the first day of the week;” but worship is not confined to this day or occasion. At any time of any day, or night, the Christian can lift his heart in worship to the Father and the Son, in the energy of the Holy Spirit, and know that his worship will be acceptable.

Christendom makes much of special “days” and “seasons;” but the New Testament knows nothing of them. These belong to Israel, and have been done away in Christ.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written for the purpose of opposing the false teachers of his day who tried to judaize Christianity, and mix law with grace, to the confusion of the believers.

Every Christian should familiarize himself with this Epistle, until it becomes part and parcel of his being. It is the best antidote against Seventh-Day Adventism, or any other attempt to judaize Christianity, as seen in Christendom. Every day should not be holy unto the Lord.

While the child of God is fortunate indeed to be able to gather with his fellow saints on the Lord's Day for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus and the worship of God; yet worship, most emphatically, is not confined to this day, or occasion, or to any season of the year.

(6) As to the energy, or power for worship

“They that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth” (vs. 24).

We have already noted that true worship must be spiritual. It must be empowered by, and under the guidance and control of the third Person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament He is described as coming upon certain individuals, on particular occasions, in order to accomplish, through them, some specific purpose. Among some of the verses are:

“And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:3)

“And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29)

“And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him” (Numbers 24:2) [In this case to change the outcome of a curse and change it into a blessing].

“And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them” (I Samuel 10:10)

“And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded” (II Chronicles 15:1)

In the New Testament, our Lord taught that the Holy Spirit, who had been with His disciples, would be sent to be within them.

Speaking of the Spirit He said: “For he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).

This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost.

Since that time every sinner, the moment he trusts Christ as his Saviour, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. By this act of the Spirit’s indwelling, each Christian is sealed, or marked out as Christ’s property, unto the day of redemption: “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13) and “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

Not only so, but the Spirit imparts to each believer a divine nature, in the power of which he can live a life pleasing to God.

The Holy Spirit now seeks, from the word of God, to teach the believer, and thus guide him into all truth: **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:13-15).**

As He is allowed to dwell ungrieved in the believer, the Spirit will so impress him with Christ, that the Lord will become increasingly precious to him. Moreover, He will empower the Christian to offer intelligent, reverent and sincere worship to the Father and the Son.

Thus the only two essentials for worship are:

- The word of God in our hands
- The Spirit of God in our hearts.

It is possible for an individual believer to grieve the Holy Spirit by his misconduct, and for an assembly of saints to quench the Spirit by limiting His activity through His people, or by an attitude of censorious criticism towards them: **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.**

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:25-32).

Consequently, there is the constant need for the believer to be **“filled with the Spirit”** for, in this way, he will be susceptible to His guidance and enabled to offer acceptable worship to God: **“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”** (Ephesians 5:18).

(7) As to the importance of worship

This is indicated by the words: **“The Father seeketh such to worship him”** (vs. 23).

In the Old Testament, it was the worshipper who sought the Lord.
In the present dispensation, it is God, as the Father, who seeks the worship of His children.

The importance of salvation is seen in the fact that Christ declared His purpose in coming into the world, as the Son of Man, was to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

This search led Him all the way to the cross.

The importance of worship is sensed by the fact that the occupation of the Father is to seek for worshippers, who shall worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

What a tremendous thought this is!

“The high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity,” not only condescends to notice a humble believer, but actually desires his sincere worship and seeks for it from him!

It would be incredible, but for the fact that His own beloved Son stated it in words that cannot possibly be misunderstood. This statement alone should be sufficient to prove to every believer the importance of worship.

How good it would be if each believer were to lay to heart the wonderful fact that he can give to God, his Father, to whom he owes everything, that which shall bring delight to His heart!

How tragic it is to think that so many Christians, either through ignorance of, or disobedience to this revelation, are keeping from their Father that which He so ardently desires them to give Him!

One of the concluding questions of the Old Testament is: **“Will a man rob God?”** and the answer, alas, is in the affirmative. (Malachi 3:8).

As Israel robbed Him in tithes and offerings, so many of His own children, for one cause or another, are withholding from God the worship He seeks and has every right to expect.

Thus, in this wonderful conversation with the woman at the well, our Lord made these drastic changes in worship.

May it be ours to give good heed to the words of Him who “spake as no man ever spake,” and see to it that our worship conforms to the pattern He has given.

Let us ever remember that:

- “**God is light,**” therefore we must be true: “**This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**” (I John 1:5);
- “**God is love,**” therefore we must be trustful: “**He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love**” (I John 4:8);
- “**God is fire,**” therefore we must beware: “**For our God is a consuming fire**”;
- “**God is Spirit,**” therefore we must be real and sincere: “**God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24).

7. Lastly, the Importance of Worship Is Seen in That it is the Occupation of Eternity (Revelation 4:5)

In the last book of the Bible, which forms the consummation of Divine revelation, we are given a glimpse into the eternity to which we are all fast hastening.

From this revelation we discover that the worship of God is the chief occupation of the eternal state.

In chapter 4, John describes the wondrous vision he was given after the voice said: “Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter” (vs. 1).

Immediately he sees before him a throne in Heaven and One who sits upon it. After describing its Occupant, he tells us of the twenty-four elders who sit before the throne, and the four living creatures who continually cry: “**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!**” As these living creatures give glory and honour to Him who sits upon the throne, the twenty-four elders fall down before God, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, saying: “**Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.**” Here is pure worship, unmingled with any petition whatsoever. It is the ascription of worth because of the intrinsic worthiness of the eternal Godhead.

In Chapter five, John goes on to further describe what he saw.

A book is produced, sealed with seven seals, and an angel proclaims: “**Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?**”

No one, either in Heaven or on earth, or under the earth, was able to respond to the challenge and this caused John to weep. At this, one of the elders said to him: **“Weep not. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.”**

As John watch breathlessly he saw, in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain, Who came forth and took the book.

At this, the elders and the living creatures again fell down before the Lamb and, as they bowed, they sang this magnificent hymn of worship. **“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.”**

Then, round about the throne, the voices of myriads of angels took up the refrain and sang: **“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing!”**

Following this song of the angels, John now heard the united voices of every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, saying with harmonious accord: **“Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!”**

At this, the living creatures responded: “Amen and the elders **“fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”**

Thus John, at the very threshold of his marvelous vision of things to come, had impressed upon his heart the vital place and the vast importance that worship has in eternity.

What a glorious day that shall be, when all the redeemed of all the ages shall be gathered together in the presence of the One whose precious blood has brought them there!

What a volume of worship shall rise to the eternal Godhead, unmingled by one discordant note to mar its majestic harmony and exquisite cadence!

There will be nothing to the trappings of man-made religions then to keep the people of God separated from each other.

Our Lord’s words shall be fulfilled in their entirety: **“There shall be one flock, and one Shepherd”** (John 10:16).

The desire, which He expressed in His prayer in John 17, shall be wonderfully answered: “That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

J.G. Deck has beautifully expressed this thought in his hymn:

“If here on earth the thought of Jesus’ love
Lift our poor hearts this weary world above,
If even here the taste of heavenly springs
So cheers the spirit, that the pilgrim sings:

What will the sunshine of His glory prove?
What the unmingled fulness of His love?
What hallelujahs shall His presence raise?
What, but one loud, eternal burst of praise!”

Thus the worship, which begins on earth, forms but the prelude to our eternal occupation.

May it be ours to form a right estimate of its tremendous importance and, by God’s grace, see to it that much of it rises from our hearts during our lifetime on earth! In this way, we shall not only bring delight to the eternal Godhead, but be in harmony with God’s revealed purpose and heaven’s occupation.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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