

## Worship

404 verses 23% of verses either deal directly with worship or with descriptions of Jesus, the Father, etc. The word "Worship" is used 22 times in the Book of Revelation [Matthew is the next most used time at 13]. Maybe the second most worshipful book in the Bible after Psalms

Worship [Proskuneo] means:

1. to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence
2. among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence
3. in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication
  - a. used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank
    1. to the Jewish high priests
    2. to God
    3. to Christ
    4. to heavenly beings
    5. to demons [Strongs]

One reason why praise and worship is such an interwoven part of Revelation is that it is a vital part of spiritual warfare. Our weapons are not carnal, but they are powerful [2 Cor. 10:4].

A good study in the book of Revelation would be: how did they worship, who did they worship, why did they worship and who was worshipping...

## Who Was Worshipping?

**John is worshipping [Rev. 1:6, 17].** John the beloved disciple, the one to whom this revelation was originally given to pass on was worshipping Jesus giving Him glory and praising His dominion - or rulership of all. John falls at the feet of Jesus - an act of worship.

**The Living Creatures [Rev. 4:6b-9, 5:8, 19:4].** Next we come to the living creatures. We have to remember that we are in a vision and should not expect these creatures to be physical, literal beings. Instead we have to understand what it is that they are picturing for us. These creatures surround the Father who is reigning in relation to His covenant. They represent the revelation of the will and purposes of God. They picture how God relates to us in covenant.

Each creature is full of eyes revealing its unerring perception of everything. God's will and purposes take into account every possibility, for nothing is a surprise to Him. As a side note: Respected Bible commentator Matthew Henry differs slightly in that he feels the creatures represent the leadership in God's church - standing between God and His people. According to him, the characteristics of the creatures reveal the nature

of the leadership instead of, as I believe, the nature of God's dealings with mankind directly.

Now we will take a closer look at each of these "creatures". The first thing to notice is how many there are: four. Four represents the entire, whole, and complete thing. It reminds us of the four corners of altar which is before God. The earth itself is sometimes spoken of as being altar-shaped, i.e. four corners of the earth, four winds, four rivers of Eden, etc. These four creatures are going to show us the entire or complete way God deals with or reveals Himself to mankind.

A lion is known for its majesty, strength, royalty, and courage. The most apparent application would be the majesty, strength, and purposes of God as revealed in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge." [Ps. 19:1-2, NIV] Nature is a witness to God and everything in nature points to and worships its Divine Creator. It also shows God's complete royal control over the earth and nature. We must remember that there is no such thing as "mother nature". God is in total control over every aspect of His creation. To think that nature or natural law controls things to fall for the basic principles of Baalism.

The Lord's strength and courage is pictured by the lion as well. "The Lord is a man of war... Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power..." [Ex. 15:3, 6] Some versions use the word ox instead of calf; however, the idea of the Greek word is youth and tenderness.

A calf was used in some sacrifices, also a fatted calf would be killed and fed to a special guest because it was the best which could be offered. "And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." [Luke 15:23] The calf shows how special we are to God. His plan gave us the best [Christ] Heaven had to offer so we could be restored to fellowship with Him.

The creature with a man's face shows that God's purposes are centered on mankind. He did not die to redeem the fallen angels. His plan is totally focused on mankind.

In Ez. 17, the countries of Babylon and Egypt are said to be eagles. Rome's emblem was also an eagle. All three nations were used as instruments of God's judgment on Israel. So the eagle-like creature shows God's purposes include judgment on those who reject Him and refuse to live according to His Law.

The eagle is also spoken of as protecting its young. God's people are protected from His judgment for they are under the wings of Jesus Christ.

**The 24 Elders Worship [Rev. 4:10-11, 5:8, 11:16, 19:4].** The 24 elders are always falling down before the throne in worship. Who do the 24 elders represent? 24 is made up of 2 12's [divine appointment]. I believe what we have represented are the true believers of the Old Testament [12 tribes] and the true believers of the New Testament

era [12 apostles]. Together all true believers [or perhaps the leadership] fall down in worship before the throne of God.

**Angels [Rev. 5:11-12, 16:5-7].** Thousands upon thousands of angels surround the living creatures and the elders and worship the Lamb Who is Worthy to be praised.

**Every created thing** in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea will worship Jesus [Rev. 5:13]. No one is able to resist the rule of Jesus [see Phil. 2:9-11]. Everyone will come and acknowledge that He is worthy. Some will come voluntarily, others reluctantly, but every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. This does not mean everyone will be saved. Some will say "Jesus is Lord" with love in their hearts, others will say it with hatred but all will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

**The Martyrs [Rev. 6:9-10, 16:7].** The martyrs worship even as they cry out for justice. In worship they present their case to the King of kings. Our petitions should always be presented wrapped in the clothes of worship and praise.

**A Great World-Wide Multitude [Rev. 7:9-10].** The kingdom of God is now world-wide and includes people from every nation and nationality on earth. No one is excluded. Anyone and everyone who come to Jesus can join this joyous crowd. This always shows that we are part of something BIG. Sometimes we only see around us and become discouraged, but the Kingdom of God is LARGE. I believe in the total view of history from creation to the second coming, the majority will be saved. Hell will be a small place compared to heaven.

**Those Who Have Come Through The Great Tribulation [Rev. 7:14-15, 16-17].**

From the viewpoint of the First Century Christians the great tribulation was even then beginning. Two tragic events collided with terrifying impact. And Christians needed to be prepared. While Christians escaped the Jewish War, it was devastating as Roman armies and Jewish bandits roamed their beloved country murdering, raping, torturing at will. Many of the suffering, unbelieving Jews had been family, friends, or business associates. Anyone who had not previously sold their land in Israel lost it along with all their other property still in the Land [knowing these things were coming is one reason why many of the Christian Jews early on sold their possessions - Acts 4:34-37]. In addition to that the Christians were about to be plunged into an incredible blood bath of their own. The inhuman Nero started the first [and perhaps most cruel] persecution of the Christians. Murder, rape, torture, and betrayal were the order of the day. Could the infant church survive such a brutal attack by the mighty Roman Empire? The Book of Revelation stood as an answer to that question: YES! It became the ray of hope in the darkest of days.

"...its primary reference is to...the 'Great Tribulation' of which Jesus warned as He spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives [Matt. 24:21; Mk. 13:19] - a tribulation that He stated would take place during the then-existing generation [Matt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lu. 21:32]; the greatest tribulation that ever was, or ever will be...This great tribulation would not destroy the church, they may have looked defeated, discouraged, and down-trodden

to the world, but God sees them as a mighty victorious army. Our calling is to endure and overcome." [Days Of Vengeance, 220]

A secondary reference is to the general tribulation all Christians must suffer as they travel through this world. "Indeed all who delight in piety and are determined to live a devoted and godly life in Christ Jesus will meet with persecution - that is, will be made to suffer because of their religious stand." [2 Tim. 3:12, Amp.] This is not to discourage us but a fact of life.

We will all suffer tribulation of some kind. It may not be violent, but it will be a genuine testing. How we perform under pressure is important. We are not to feel condemned for our shortcomings if we fail and get up and try again, knowing when we conquer we will enter into a new level of Christian experience. God is preparing us for a glorious future. Pain and suffering are sometimes the necessary tools need to mold and shape character so we will be able to stand in the last day unashamed.

**144,000** [Rev. 7:4-8, **14:1-3**, 4-5].

There were 144,000 Jews sealed. Again we should not err by slipping into a literal interpretation of what is so apparently a symbolic book. What does the 144,000 represent then? The 144,000 by itself doesn't tell us very much. Fortunately, the Scriptures explain themselves and we are given the breakdown of the number into smaller numbers we can recognize and understand.

The 144,000 is divided into the 12 tribes of Israel - 12,000 in each tribe. We know then we are dealing with Jews and 12 in Scripture frequently symbolizes Divine appointment or administration [i.e. 12 tribes, 12 apostles, etc.]. The 12 tribes, which made up the nation of Israel, were the Divinely appointed instruments of God in the Old Testament to bring His Saviour into the world.

The 12,000 of each tribe shows we are not talking about all Jews but the Jewish believers. As Paul pointed out in Romans 9:6-8: "For you cannot count all "Israelites" as the true Israel of God. Nor can all Abraham's descendants be considered truly children of Abraham. The promise was that "in Isaac shall thy children be called". That means that it is not the natural descendants who are children of God, but that the children of the promise are to be considered truly Abraham's children." [Phillips] Belonging to a certain nation alone has never saved anyone: It has always been a matter of faith! In these verses we are reminded a remnant was going to be saved - those who believed in faith. "Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved.'" [Rom. 9:27, NKJV]

By breaking down the number 12,000 into 12 X 1,000 we can see two further points. As we have already noted the 12 shows God's Divine appointment or selection. All those whom God has chosen will be saved. The 1,000 reminds us we don't know exactly how many God has appointed because 1,000 symbolizes a large but unknown number.

### **The Victors [Rev. 15:2-4].**

Rev. 4:6 told us the sea of glass was before God's throne. The sea of glass being mingled with fire and the fact they had victory over the beast, etc. shows that those who withstood temptation and persecution - those who held firm their faith - are rejoicing before God. Even in times when the fierce anger of God is being displayed those who are loyal to Him can rejoice and be glad.

The sea being red [fire] can also be a picture of the Red Sea, which is where the Israelites were saved and their enemies destroyed. There is no hope for those who try to destroy God's people except in repentance.

Paul describes the Red Sea salvation as a "Baptism" [1 Cor. 10:1-2]. By going through the Great Tribulation of the dual attack by the Jewish leaders and the Roman Empire, the Church had its baptism by fire. It had been tried in the hottest fire and not been found wanting.

When we are victorious over the trials and temptations of life we are standing on the transparent sea of glass. The fires of judgment do not touch us for in God's eyes we are perfect because of Christ. We can rejoice with the heavenly host in the goodness of God.

[They rejoiced by singing the Song of Moses recorded in Deut. 32. Interestingly, it is a song of God's faithful dealings with His people, their forsaking Him, and His judgment on them. A song which was seeing it's final and terrible fulfillment in the tragic events which were to take place in the Jewish War. And they sang the Song of the Lamb - the song of redemption - which is recorded in this and the following verse.]

### **BONUS - NOT ON VIDEO**

Now let's look at just one of the many descriptions of Jesus found in the Book of Revelation. Rev. 1:12-18.

**Clothed In A Long Robe With A Golden Sash Around His Chest** [Rev. 1:13] - Here is a golden band or girdle around the chest of Jesus. Gold pictures Righteousness or Divinity in the Bible. In Bible times the girdle was a band usually about 5 inches broad and fastened with clasps. It served as a belt and also had pouches to keep money and other things in. On a trip the long robes would often get in the way, so to make walking easier the ends of the robe would be tucked into the girdle. So when Jesus has His robe tied with the girdle, it shows He is ready for action. [Luke 12:35-36]

We see Jesus, the Son of Man, clothed in the normal clothes of the time reminding us of His human nature, yet His chest had a gold band showing He also had a divine nature. He is now ready to take action. The message of the Book of Revelation is not going to be passive but full of Divine activity.

This description also reminds us of the High Priest's clothes which represented the radiant image of God. [Ex. 28:4, 29:5, 39:27-29; Lev. 16:4]. Many of the images here and in the following verses are taken from Daniel. [See: Dan. 7:9-10, 13-14, 10:5-11]

**Hairs Of His Head Were White Like Wool** [Rev. 1:14] - The head and hair of Jesus are seen as white, picturing His purity - in Him there is no flaw whatsoever. He is Perfection itself.

**Eyes Were Like A Flame Of Fire** [Rev. 1:14, 2:18] - His divine anger has been provoked and the fire of judgment is in His eyes. He is ready to move in judgment; first, against His own people if they will not live according to His Word and Laws, and second, against the heathen who reject His call to repentance.

**Feet Like Burnished Bronze Refined In A Furnace** [Rev. 1:15, 2:18] - Brass represents the judgment of God on sin. In Ex. 27:1-8, we see the altar at the gate of the Tabernacle was to be overlaid with brass and in Ex. 30:18, we see the laver was to be made of brass. The sin offering on the brazen altar represented Jesus dying on the cross and taking the full force of God's judgment for sin. The brazen laver represented washing the sin from our lives by applying the Word of God. Moses also lifted up a brass serpent in the wilderness [Nu. 21:9] picturing Jesus being lifted up on the cross and taking God's judgment for us.

The feet of Jesus, shining as brass, shows He suffered the full wrath and judgment of God on our behalf. This is in accordance to the first promise of redemption [Gen. 3:15] where Jesus would be bruised [or crushed] in the heel but the head of the serpent would be crushed.

We also see that "Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered." [Heb. 5:8, NKJV] He has been tried in the furnace of affliction and has been proven faithful.

**Voice Like The Roar Of Many Waters** [Rev. 1:15] - Since He has come through all the testing, trials, and judgments victoriously, He can speak with a loud voice of authority. He will not be ignored. All must follow Him or be lost. Also "many waters" represents. His voice now goes to all nations and is not limited to only one small nation. Christianity is truly international with all nations flowing into the ever-expanding Kingdom of God.

**In His Right Hand He Held Seven** [Rev. 1:16, 2:1] - The stars represent men of leadership in the churches [as we will see in vs. 20]. Also "The symbolic use of the seven stars was quite well known in the first century, for the seven stars appeared regularly on the Emperor's coins as symbols of his supreme political sovereignty. At least some early readers of the Revelation must have gasped in amazement at St. John's audacity in stating that the seven stars were in Christ's hand. The Roman emperors had appropriated to themselves a symbol of dominion that the Bible reserves for God alone - and St. John is saying, Jesus Christ has come to take it back." [Days Of Vengeance, 78]

The right hand is symbolic of things which come naturally to us or are a natural part of us. The right hand of Jesus controls His leadership. Command is a part of His nature. The leadership are His servants who must answer to Him. The right hand can also show authority. Jesus has complete and unquestioned authority over His church.

**From His Mouth A Sharp Two-Edged Sword** [Rev. 1:16, 2:12] - The sharp two-edged sword represents the Word of God which "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrows, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." [Heb. 4:12] Being two-edged reveals the Word's complete effectiveness. A two-edged sword is able to kill on a back-stroke. Every word of God is effective - sometimes it is obvious [a forward thrust], sometimes it takes a little while and comes in on a back-stroke.

**Face Was Like The Sun** [Rev. 1:16] - Shining as the sun indicates the glory of God. Jesus, right now, has received all glory and honour. Ever since the resurrection He has been "ablaze like the sun at its height." [Phillips]

**The First And The Last** [Rev. 1:17, 2:8] - Jesus reminds us of His all-encompassing nature. Since this is repeated so often it must be a vital point. Everything we have, are, or will be must be inside of Christ. If it is not part of Christ and His kingdom then it must be a part of Satan and his kingdom; there is no neutral ground. We must always be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." [Heb. 12:2]

**The Living One Who Died And Is Alive Forevermore** [Rev. 1:18] - Six times in the first chapter Jesus reminds us of His eternal nature. To a persecuted church this is a valuable message. No matter what disasters occur in life, we have eternity with Jesus. The message of eternity is one of comfort and hope. The pain and suffering we endure in this life - if done for Christ - will work eternal rewards. If we have a long-term vision we will come through the trials of the moment. [Heb. 5:7-10, 12:2-3] Think of a long line that goes on and on. Then think of your life as but one small dot on that line. That "dot" is important for it sets the course of the line after it but, on the other hand, no matter what we have to go through in this life it is but a "dot" on the line of eternity and so no sacrifice is too great to make a positive impact our life after death.

We serve and love a living God - not a piece of wood, not a picture on a wall, not an idea, not a dead hero or wise man - but the Living God. Right Here, Right Now.