

FIND & FOLLOW 2022
What Is, and What Will Be
Revelation 7

Revelation is an astonishing book. It is unlike any other book in the New Testament. It is filled with dramatic and even terrifying imagery about the destruction of the world. It also contains some of the most beautiful descriptions of heaven that can be found anywhere in the Bible. **It is a book of PROPHECY about what WILL BE. It is also a book of PROMISES to those that belong to God.** **But before it is anything else, Revelation is a book of WORSHIP!** From the very beginning of the book John the Beloved leads us into a HYMN of PRAISE, acknowledging the eternal glory of God “**who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.**” There are actually 14 distinct worship celebrations (called DOXOLOGIES) that are found in Revelation. They are an echo of what already is. Worship was the hallmark of eternity past. **God has ALWAYS been WORTHY of worship. His creation cannot help but worship him. Isaiah taught us that God is always surrounded by angels that do his bidding and worship the One that brought them into being and gave them purpose. Their very purpose is worship!** In the beginning, the heavens rejoiced, and the Morning Stars sang together. It was beautiful, and it was PERFECT! And that worship continues unabated in heaven and on earth today (“the trees of the field clap their hands . . .”), and will continue to do so through the LAST DAYS and into ETERNITY future.

There is one word – ONE IMAGE – that is CENTRAL to the entire book of Revelation: **The THRONE of GOD.** It is the KEY to everything that is revealed about what WILL BE and WHY. His throne is mentioned in the preface to the letters to the 7 churches, and it is linked with his name and title as the Ruler of the Kings of the earth. **[Later given as the KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS].** Throughout the letters and indeed the entire book, the NAMES of God that are ascribed to him speak of his ABSOLUTE POWER and RULE over all things! It is the OVER ARCHING CONCEPT in every aspect of worship that is given to him. **WE WORSHIP HIM AS THE SOVEREIGN LORD.**

Oh, that we would understand just a hint of the glory of his sovereignty! He is not like us. He is not pushed around by his enemies and he is not at the mercy of history. The unfolding of life is HIS STORY, and he is calling the shots along the way. He knows the END from the very BEGINNING, and he has written the script! Even when sin entered the picture, God was GRIEVED but not CONFOUNDED. His plan for REDEMPTION preceded sin itself! Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world!

In Revelation 4, we see the FIRST SCENE of worship, and we hear the PRAISES echoing all throughout heaven as the saints and the angels praise God on his throne. **WE WORSHIP HIM AS THE CREATOR.**

Revelation 4:1-11 NIV

1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, **"Come up here, and I will**

show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: " 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come." 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. **They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."**

I love this worship scene. You and I will BE THERE worshipping with these saints and angels! Imagine that! And we will begin our worship service by acknowledging God's glory as the CREATOR. You cannot read Revelation without being reminded over and over that God is the Creator. He brought all things into existence through his WISDOM and POWER. He created everything around us and under us and above us . . . and US. **And he is NOT FINISHED creating! Revelation is the prophetic account of God's continued creative glory.** What is – the mountains and the stars and the trees and the animals and the mighty seas – as beautiful as they are, are just a WARM UP to the glories of heaven! We haven't seen anything yet. Paul saw it, but was told not to describe it to anyone. John saw it and has done his best to describe the beauty of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. **He tells us of a street of GOLD and gates of PEARL and walls of rubies and diamonds, but this is a description of the most MUNDANE things in the new heavens. [Who goes to a magnificent city and comes back only to talk of the cobblestone streets and the iron gates, unless these are the only things that he can find the words to describe?]**

But the worship of God continues in Revelation as another glorious aspect of his character is unveiled. Without this aspect, none of us would have the privilege of bowing down before him and throwing our crowns at his feet!

WE WORSHIP HIM AS THE REDEEMER. Revelation 5:6-14 NIV

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had

taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. 9 **And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."** 11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" 13 **Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"** 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

ALL creation joins in this praise! The creation has been GROANING as it waited for the fulfillment of redemption. We have too! I never want to get over the sense of humility and joy and wonder that fills me when I think that the Son of God gave his life to rescue me from my own sin and selfishness and rebellion! Why would he do this? Only because of who he is! Worthy is the LAMB who was slain, and who is now STANDING at the center of the throne of God. **[DESCRIBE REDEMPTION]** Can you praise him for that?

But I do not want us to miss what else is happening in this scene. This host of angels and redeemed saints are **worshipping the Lamb because he is "worthy to take the scroll and open its seals."** **This is a reference to the scroll that contains the details of the WRATH of God that is to be poured out on this sin-sick world.** Only the Redeemer is worthy to usher in the terrible wrath of God on defiant sinners. **WE WORSHIP HIM AS THE JUDGE.**

Reading through the pages of this ANCIENT account of a very PRESENT reality is a very SOBERING experience. When John the Apostle was invited up into heaven to see "what is about to happen," he is soon overwhelmed by an unrelenting series of punishments that are meted out to a sinful, defiant world. According to the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit no longer RESTRAINS EVIL once the church has been RAPTURED (**2 Thessalonians 2**). Just as in the days before NOAH, wickedness is rampant! **And Satan is allowed to carry out his foul plans, but under the sovereign hand of God!** **In Revelation 6, the FOUR HORSEMEN of the APOCALYPSE gallop out onto the world scene.** A WHITE horse carrying a conqueror who brings the world into submission to his plans (the Anti-Christ). A rider on a RED horse rode out next. He brings DIVISION to the earth under the Anti-Christ's reign. A third horse and rider came out which was BLACK as night. This rider was FAMINE, and he causes much suffering on the whole earth. The next one rode a PALE horse, and he represented DEATH, and HELL followed after him. He was given the power to KILL one-fourth of the world's population through war, famine, and plague!

After the 4 Horsemen are unleashed, a FIFTH SEAL is opened that reveals a host of people who are MARTYRED because they refused to follow the Anti-Christ, and instead chose to follow Christ Jesus during these opening days of tribulation. They are under an altar, crying out to God to avenge their blood. The Lord instructs them to trust him and be patient as he carries out his holy plan of judgment. **Their prayers will be answered . . . in HIS divine timing.** The very next seal releases a series of cataclysmic events on earth and in the heavens that are terrifying! **Revelation 6:12-17 NIV**

12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 **They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"**

Does it BOTHER you to think that God would pour out his WRATH on this world? Do you struggle to believe that HELL is a real place where unrepentant sinners will spend eternity suffering for their defiance and unbelief? **An honest examination of scripture can only lead you to ONE CONCLUSION: Judgment IS COMING.** God is too holy to ignore sin and allow it to go eternally unpunished! **But his holiness and his wrath do NOT CONFLICT with his love and his mercy.** In fact, they are necessary and complimentary aspects of his GLORY. Revelation brings this together in such a dramatic way. **I think that one of the most glorious aspects of Revelation is the way that it demonstrates God's divine PATIENCE in showing MERCY.** He never REACTS in anger. He is "slow to anger," but "loves to show mercy." God never LOSES his temper! Even when in the very MIDST of pouring out his divine FURY, he can arrest his actions and stop to RESCUE some of the very people that had aroused his anger. **See it demonstrated in the very MIDDLE of the GREAT TRIBULATION.**

WE WORSHIP HIM AS THE MERCIFUL GOD. Revelation 7:1-4 NIV

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 3 "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." 4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

This PAUSE in the tribulation is for the sake of an ARMY of JEWISH EVANGELISTS that will bring about the greatest REVIVAL in history! It will be the fulfillment of the prophecy that Christ made that **"this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world**

as a testimony, and then the end will come.” **Matthew 24:14.** These Jewish evangelists are protected by a mark that God places on them so that no one can kill them as they carry the Gospel to the whole world. This is an answer to prayers like the one Habakkuk made to God. **Habakkuk 3:2 NIV**

2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; **in wrath remember mercy.**

What a marvelous thought it is that God STORES UP our prayers and responds to them LONG AFTER we have prayed them. Habakkuk prayed this wonderful prayer when God was disciplining the Children of Israel by completely destroying their homeland and sending them into exile by the hands of a godless nation. He heard Habakkuk then, and he hears Habakkuk now. This leads us to the last worship scene that we will read together, and it is a scene that depicts the INNUMERABLE HOST of people that are saved during the Great Tribulation as a result of the preaching of the 144,000 evangelists!

Revelation 7:9-17 NIV

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, **standing before the throne and before the Lamb.** They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: **"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."** 11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" 13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" 14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, **"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** 15 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 shelter them with his presence. 16 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

The great TRAGEDY is that there will not be a soul alive in that day that will not have the opportunity to find salvation in the midst of wrath. But they will not. Just as in our day, people will continue to rebel and remain in their sin. See it in this one other passage.

Revelation 9:20-21 NIV

20 The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. 21 Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

What will you do in response to the Sovereign Creator, Redeemer, Judge, and Merciful One? He has done all that is necessary to bring you out and bring you in. That is what COULD BE for you, but Revelation is what WILL BE for everyone . . . one way or another.

Let's pray.

**FIND & FOLLOW 2022
December 11 – Hernando Facilitation Guide
What Is and What Will Be – Revelation 7**

Start talking

What most inspires passionate worship towards God in you, and why?

Start thinking.

How can (or do) you keep the 2nd Coming of Christ as a present hope and expectation in your life?

Start sharing.

[Read Revelation 4](#). Why is worship such a central aspect of Revelation? What aspects of God's splendor and character do you see here?

Why is the throne such a significant image in Revelation, and how does God's sovereignty affect the way you view world events?

[Read Revelation 5:6-10; 9:20-21](#). Why is it significant that the Lamb is the One who opens the scrolls? Why would God unleash these judgments on the world?

[Read Revelation 7:1-17 and Habakkuk 3:2](#). Why does God interrupt the Tribulation in this passage? What do these verses tell you about both the wrath and the mercy of God?

Start praying.

Ask the Lord to increase your passion for his return as you serve him faithfully.

Start doing.

Read through these worship passages in Revelation 4,5, and 7 slowly, and have your own worship service!