

Living Word Fellowship Church

The Book of Revelation

An Explanation of Worship as it Relates to The Church of Sardis, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

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I. Introduction

A. Purpose of Worship:

The purpose of worship is to give expression to a relationship that has been established by God, as a result of the believer's commitment to Christ death and resurrection. It is practiced because of believers giving homage to God in thought, feeling and act, with or without the aid of symbols and rites.

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29).

B. What is True Worship?

Worship cannot occur without total commitment (Rom. 12:1) to a personal day to day walk with Christ (Matt. 4:10; Eph. 4:1-3; 5:2). It must always involve time, commitment, prayer, the Lord's Supper and fellowship (Acts 2:42), thanksgiving, praise and the reading and teaching of scripture (Col. 3:15-17; 1 Tim. 4:11-16).

Worship must also be an expression of a walk of faith with Christ, through giving (Prov. 11:24-25; 2 Cor. 9:6-15). Giving magnifies a worshipful committed relationship with Christ (2 Cor. 9:12-15; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). It needs to be our first fruits not our "leftovers" because this angers God (Mal. 3)

Worship should also be a time of thanksgiving to God for His goodness, faithfulness, and grace (Ps. 95). The total focus of the worship service is to focus on thanksgiving and praise and not a request for needs (Ps. 29:2; Ps. 96:9; 138:2).

II. The Church of Sardis

A. The church of Sardis was considered to be "alive" (3:1), but God considered "were about to die" (3:2).

1. This church from a human perspective had a name – meaning a reputation as the church that is alive (3:1).
 2. Even though their worship was alive it was a dying church because of a lack of faithful service. Worship is viewed as an act of service to the Lord (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 12:28).
 - a) Faithful service leads to spiritual maturity, which in turn leads to worship (Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 3:16-17).
- B. This is a church that needed to repent (Revelation 3:3).

III. The Characteristics of Acceptable Worship; Chapter 4 and 5

A. Attitude:

1. Worship in the ancient world was more than just vocal expression; it also involved physical action. One gesture was to bow down by kneeling. The psalmist invites Israel, *“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker”* (Ps. 95:6).
2. Verses 9–10 show that their praise is done repeatedly (Hebrews 10:23-25), but not continuously. Each time the living creatures sing praise to God, the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves and worship him.¹
 - a) *“Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.”* (Deuteronomy 28:47-48; NASU)

B. Respect:

1. The creatures praise God for His holiness (4:8) and the elders praise God for His worthiness as Creator of all things (4:11). Seeing God in His holiness and Creator-sovereignty is indispensable for appreciating the upcoming judgment of the contrasting evil on the earth. The praise of a holy God results in seeing how bad it is on earth and how glorious it is in heaven.²
2. They cast their crowns before the throne, singing: this action acknowledges that God is the supreme King, who rules over them. Crowns represent their power, authority to rule as kings, and so here they surrender their power to God. The verb has the forceful meaning of “throw,” and it seems better to represent this meaning than to say something

¹ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993). *A handbook on the Revelation to John* (pp. 93–94). New York: United Bible Societies.

² Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 740). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

like “lay” (REB) or “lay down” (TNT). The Greek verb translated *singing* by RSV is “saying” (TEV). In many languages this clause will be rendered as “they throw their chiefs’ hats down in front of the high chief’s chair.”³

3. The ground of praise here is God’s *eternity*, and God’s *power* and *glory* manifested in the creation of all things for His pleasure. Creation is the foundation of all God’s other acts of power, wisdom, and love, and therefore forms the first theme of His creatures’ thanksgivings.
4. To give glory to God means to proclaim that God is “glorious,” that is, majestic and wonderful. To give ... honor to God is to proclaim that God is great, famous, worthy of praise. To give ... thanks is to thank, to declare one’s gratitude for benefits received. For glory see 1:6; the word translated honor appears also in 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 21:26, always associated with glory. The noun translated thanks appears elsewhere in Revelation only at 7:12.⁴

C. His Authority:

1. Right hand (vs. 1) – This is a place that defines purpose, high ranking, and equal power and dignity.
2. Christ was not worshipped while on earth because of how people viewed His lack of authority.
 - a) He was born in weakness, and He died in weakness; but He is the recipient of all power. He became the poorest of the poor (2 Cor. 8:9), and yet He owns all the riches of heaven and earth. Men laughed at Him and called Him a fool; yet He is the very wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3).⁵
3. Since horns symbolize strength (1 Kings 22:11), the “seven horns” represent the authority and strength of a ruler (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 13:1). The “seven eyes” defined as the seven spirits of God (cf. Zech. 3:9; 4:10) symbolically represent the Holy Spirit (cf. Rev. 1:4, 4:5). **Because He alone is worthy, the Lamb took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne** (cf. Dan. 7:9, 13–14).⁶
4. In chapter 5 “the book represents authority in executing the divine plan of judgment and redemption is clear from the parallelism of the hymns in 5:9–10 and 5:12.”⁷

³ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993). *A handbook on the Revelation to John* (p. 94). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁴ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993). *A handbook on the Revelation to John* (p. 94). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 586). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁶ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). *Revelation*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 945). Victor Books.

⁷ Beale, G. K. (1999). *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 340). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

5. Thus, the seven seals, representing all power given to the Lamb; the seven trumpets, by which the world kingdoms are shaken and overthrown, and the Lamb's kingdom ushered in; and the seven vials, by which the beast's kingdom is destroyed.⁸

*"Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours" (1 Chron. 29:11).*⁹

⁸ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 566). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁹ Arnold, C. E. (2002). [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#). (Vol. 4, p. 287). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.