

Lesson 13

"Worship in the Book of Revelation"

This is the final lesson in our journey to discover worship in the Bible. The entire Bible, Genesis through Revelation, testifies of God's yearning to love sinners and reconcile them to Himself. He wants to dwell with them. Throughout this quarter we have discussed the 1888 message concepts relative to "worship," which in the Book of Revelation reaches its grand crescendo in chapter 19:1-7, where we find those four glorious "Hallelujah Choruses," each greater than Handel's *Messiah*.

They say that something must happen that at last makes possible that "the Lord God omnipotent reigns"! And that something, not having happened yet, has delayed His "reign" for many, many years, even though He finished His dying "instead" of us. What finally must happen is that "the Lamb's wife" "make herself ready" for the intimacy of the "marriage of the Lamb." What happened on the cross was wonderful indeed, but nobody can (or will) be happy in heaven until those Hallelujah Choruses can be sung, proclaiming a hitherto elusive victory.

Yes, He died "instead" of us, and salvation is assured. Yes, He opened the gates of Paradise, and it was all done even before we were born. And we can agree: we contribute nothing to our own salvation.

But does all that mean that we His people, being "covered" by this celestial Insurance Policy, now have only to "wait" and "occupy until [He] comes"? (Cf. Luke 19:13; that word "occupy" has come to mean make lots of money, enjoy the world, don't lose out, have our fun as though there were no solemn Day of Atonement for us to live in.) Does Christ's dying "instead" of us mean that we have no cross to "share" with Him? That we just "wait" for the call of the first resurrection? Or is there some serious business before us about getting ready to meet Jesus at His second coming?

As we come nearer to the end, a change comes in the "Christian experience" of God's people. Their deepest heart concern ceases to be that of saving their own souls, to a concern for the glory of Christ in the closing hours of the "great controversy between Christ and Satan. These people of God in the last days turn away from their previous concern for their own salvation to a concern for Another--that *He* emerge victorious from the "battle" He is in.

This change in "Christian experience" can be described as graduating out of the Old Covenant into the New. It's coming out of the shadows into the bright sunlight of "present truth" (a term used in 2 Peter 1:12). The "present truth" is New Covenant living, not Old.

This change is also passing from Revelation 18 into Revelation 19 where we find those four Hallelujah Choruses. It can at last be said that "the Lord God omnipotent *reigneth*. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (19:6, 7). At last!

Although the Lord is "omnipotent," He cannot force the nuptials. It cannot be said that He "reigneth" until her nuptial devotion to Him as to a divine Husband is real. Thus there is a "woman" whose marital devotion He can only wait, and wait, to see. The good news that rejoices one's heart is that this change in spiritual growth is actually taking place.

The story of Job bears similarity to the last book of the Bible. He was a man who was "blameless," a man whom God declared several times as "upright," who refused evil.

The idea is not that Job was immaculately sinless, sinless in nature; the idea is that God accepted him as blameless *in character*. Likewise, the Bible idea is not that the "144,000" are sinless *in nature* or immaculately, physically perfect. But they are "upright," they still have a sinful nature but they have "overcome even as [Christ] overcame" while burdened with a sinful nature inherited from Adam.

Revelation climaxes with the story of a *corporate group* of people who are described as "without fault before the throne of God" who "follow the Lamb [the crucified Christ] wherever He goes" (14:5). In other words, Job and the 144,000 share the joy of learning to surrender self to be "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). As such, they are privileged to honor God in a cosmic crisis when He is on trial in the most severe litigation imaginable in the universe: the issue is whether He, the Lord, is worthy to continue as the sovereign Ruler of the universe.

We have long understood "the hour of [God's] judgment" in Revelation 14:6, 7 as the hour when He judges you and me; but the book of Job puts forth the idea that it is God Himself who is on trial before the universe. And poor humble Job ends up with the task of defending Him in court.

He succeeds; he defends the Lord of glory. But now in the end of time, the great controversy between Christ and Satan can not be successfully concluded until this *corporate body* of people from the last weak end of the human race, after 6000 years of desperate sin and moral failure, again defend Him on the witness stand by demonstrating

the same "blamelessness" that Job demonstrated. Again they prove Satan wrong! This is a "most precious message"--the gospel of the cross defeats sin and in so doing vindicates God.

A "remnant" that is truly reconciled to God in this grand Day of Atonement will be agents whom the Lord will employ in some way. They will fulfill the role of those "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth" that hateful violence shall not break loose until "the servants of our God [are] sealed" (Rev. 7:1-3) That "seal of God" is even now being placed on those "144,000," a mystic symbolic number whose prayers are in tune with Heaven.

The Lord Jesus will find that 144,000 from this last generation who will be moved to forsake the world and all its pleasures and "follow" Him, singing the new song of joy.

When we begin to realize what Christ *accomplished* on His cross, we can't wait until we join our voices to swell the anthem: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:12).

Now all the Angels in heaven are crying out to us, it's time that "1888" be understood. Start singing now; you will be happy forever.

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland