

Jesus' desire and prayer for the church is that we all be united as one worshipping in Spirit and truth. (John 4:24) Too often, we get bogged down in attitudes, personalities and preferences and even in how to go about doing God's will, when the real reason we gather is to worship the Lord and focus on Him. (Psalm 29:2) The natural outcome of true worship does edify and build us up in our most holy faith, and that happens when the focus is Jesus. (Jude 20-21) When Jesus is our focus, we participate in His love for each other. He is what makes us one and brings a unity to all our diversity. When together our focus is on Him alone, we experience oneness. (Ephesians 4:5-6)

Can you recall some of the best worship times at church? What made it so wonderful? Why was it memorable? I think you will answer the same as every Christian... "It was when the Lord was made very real to me. I sensed His love for me in a deeper way. I saw Him more clearly. I understood His personal desire for me greater than ever before." Like Isaiah or Ezekiel, you were awed by the wonder of God. (Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:28) Words were inadequate to describe the impression in your heart, the adoration you felt for Him.

Man can orchestrate emotional highs, but a greater revelation of Jesus comes when hearts are hungering for Him and the power of the Spirit reveals Him through the Word. Worship happens when we see Him more clearly. That is greater than our personal daily needs and desires, our preferences and tastes. Every other preference must be set aside for the all consuming passion to know Jesus.

In John 4:19-26 the woman at the well tried to change the subject Jesus had brought up. He has just told her about her sin and she wanted to avoid that by discussing religious differences. The beauty in that account is that Jesus prompted her to see Him, His forgiveness, grace and mercy. All the religious differences became insignificant. It is not that they are unimportant. Doctrine is essential. It keeps us from going after a false Messiah. But when we see Jesus, we get a hunger for His Word and doctrine falls in line and eventually gets straightened out. The peripheral issues take second place to the glory and wonder of Jesus. As Watchman Nee wrote, "Jesus is the sum of all spiritual things!" Spirituality that does not focus on Jesus is deception.

The letters to the churches all started with a revelation of Jesus. Just getting a glimpse of that particular facet of Him would have set each church straight, but Jesus went on to explain what that revelation meant in practical terms, whether a rebuke or a blessing or both. Remember, above all else, this book is a revelation of Jesus. (1:1) In this chapter we are going to see Him as many of us have never seen Him before.

**Commented [notes1]: John 4:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

**Commented [notes2]: Psalm 29:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

**Commented [notes3]: Jude 1:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,  
<sup>21</sup> keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

**Commented [notes4]: Ephesians 4:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**Commented [notes5]: Isaiah 6:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

**Commented [notes6]: Ezekiel 1:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

**Commented [notes7]: John 4:19-26 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.  
<sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."  
<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.  
<sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.  
<sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.  
<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."  
<sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."  
<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

**Commented [notes8]: Revelation 1:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" In Chapter 4 John went through that heavenly door and saw the throne room of heaven. We were introduced to the four living creatures that declare God's praises as they fly around the throne. (4:6) We also learned of the 24 elders and their continual declaration of the worthiness of the One on the throne, for all things were created by Him, and through Him, and for Him. (4:11) The One on the throne is God Almighty, a spirit, but what we see there is Jesus.

In the first verse, a hand comes out from the glory around the throne with a scroll written on both sides with seven seals. A strong angel, (that is repetitive!) asks so powerfully that all of creation throughout time can hear, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

How worthy do you have to be? First, you must be worthy enough to approach God. Jesus makes all believers worthy in that regard. (Ephesians 2:18) But this is more than that. This scroll brings the end of man's governments, the wrath of God, and the establishment of God's physical kingdom on earth. (Revelation 12:10) How worthy do you have to be to do that? Until that is accomplished, sin will continue to cause untold suffering through the ages.

<sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup> and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Who can put an end to all the pain in the world that sin has caused? When we get just a slight understanding of the enormity of suffering, we weep with John. Atheists see it and use it as an argument against God's existence. How strange, when in fact it is the absence of godliness that has brought this suffering. It can only end when God again reigns over all and sin is banished from our hearts and minds. (21:4)

To be worthy to open the scrolls One would first need to reconcile all who would come to the Father by faith and make a way for them to be eternally righteous. (Hebrews 9:15) That One must be able to do away with sin. (Hebrews 9:26) Who could do such a thing but God alone? And so God became a man in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, the only begotten Son of God. He lived the perfect demands of the Law and was worthy to be the perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of all who receive His gift. His perfect life and sacrificial death, and finishing the work God gave Him to do, made Him worthy to open the seals. He reconciled what was separated in the Garden of Eden. He paid the wages of sin Himself. (Romans 6:23) But opening the seals also means dealing with sin in the unrepentant by eternally separating them from the presence of God, which is the second death. (21:8)

**Commented [notes9]: Revelation 4:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

**Commented [notes10]: Revelation 4:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

**Commented [notes11]: Ephesians 2:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

**Commented [notes12]: Revelation 12:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

**Commented [notes13]: Revelation 21:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. E

**Commented [notes14]: Hebrews 9:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

**Commented [notes15]: Hebrews 9:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

**Commented [notes16]: Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Commented [notes17]: Revelation 21:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

<sup>5</sup> *And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."* One of the elders told John that there was no need to keep weeping over the ongoing destruction of sin. The Messiah had conquered! The Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David are Messianic titles for the One that God promised would reign forever. (Genesis 49:9; Isaiah 11:10) The righteous eternal king had conquered. What had He conquered? Sin and death were defeated by His own death in our place. He had conquered Satan and the entire demonic realm. (Colossians 2:15) He had displayed the power of unending love. (1Corinthians 13:8) He had shown that mercy prevails over judgment. (James 2:13)

Now for the surprising image that must have confused John for a moment, <sup>6</sup> *And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* We should picture this scene as best we can in our mind's eye. The throne of God is the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant. The 24 elders surround the throne in worship. Around them fly the four living creatures singing the praises of God's holiness. There from among the elders steps forward a lamb. We had that beautiful and moving painting of the lamb in the art show. The word for "slain" here is the same word used for "sacrifice". Students of the Word should instantly think of numerous Scriptures, from the Law (Exodus 12:3-6), the prophets (Isaiah 53:7), the Gospels (John 1:29), and the letters (1Peter 1:19), as this scene is overflowing with theological significance.

Many churches today have set aside the need for atonement and call it an outdated and barbaric thought. That is because they are ignoring the horror of sin. They call good evil and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20) No wonder they are horrified by the need for a sacrificial substitution. They convince themselves they have done no wrong. The word sin has no meaning to them. While atheists argue that pain and suffering mean there can't be a loving God, the liberal Christians argue that that pain and suffering is not the result of sin. And **towering over all their denials is the cross of Jesus**, the Lamb that was slain to redeem us. (Matthew 26:28) He was the fulfillment of all the lambs sacrificed by Israel. He is the Passover Lamb that saves us from the second death. And all He asks of us is that we humbly come and receive the free gift of eternal life. His eyes see every soul. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, woos every heart on the entire earth, in the past, now, and until the last day. His seven horns tells us He has all power to judge the world, and these seals He is about to open are filled with those judgments.

<sup>7</sup> *And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.* <sup>8</sup> *And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* There is a great sense of anticipation as all

**Commented [notes18]: Genesis 49:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

**Commented [notes19]: Isaiah 11:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

**Commented [notes20]: Colossians 2:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

**Commented [notes21]: 1 Corinthians 13:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

**Commented [notes22]: James 2:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

**Commented [notes23]: Exodus 12:3-6 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers'—houses, a lamb for a household. <sup>4</sup> And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. <sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, <sup>6</sup> and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

**Commented [notes24]: Isaiah 53:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

**Commented [notes25]: John 1:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

**Commented [notes26]: 1 Peter 1:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

**Commented [notes27]: Isaiah 5:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

**Commented [notes28]: Matthew 26:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

of history is about to culminate in the opening of these seals on the scroll that the Lamb has just received. The response of the elders and the living creatures is to fall down before the Lamb.

The legend of King Arthur draws from this passage. Arthur was the only one that could pull the sword from the stone, meaning he was the one destined to save the kingdom. In a similar way the Lamb taking the scroll from Almighty God means that He alone is worthy. (Daniel 7:13-14) He has redeemed His bride. He has conquered death. He has fulfilled the will of the Father and made restoration with man possible. (Romans 5:10) Evil will be vanquished forever. Justice will prevail upon the earth. The King will reign in righteousness, forever. (Isaiah 32:1)

These elders have harps to accompany their praise and bowls filled with the prayers of God's people. The prayers are compared to incense. (Psalm 141:2) That, too, is imagery out of the Tabernacle. (Exodus 33:15) I love the fact that the Lamb was in their midst, for He is not ashamed to call us brothers. (Hebrews 2:11) He is in our midst even now!

*<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* Can you see Jesus as a Lamb that was sacrificed, holding the scroll with seven seals and the chorus of living creatures and 24 elders with their harps singing this song to the worthiness of the Lamb? Remember that the voice of the cherubim can make the threshold of the temple shake. (Isaiah 6:4) I don't think these harps need amplifiers. They are God created instruments of praise. And the voices of these elders comes from their heavenly bodies!

The reason they sing is because they know what it means for the Lamb to receive the scroll. They know His sacrificial death ransomed people from every corner of the globe to be a kingdom of priests to reign on the earth. No more corrupt politicians! Hallelujah! Now those who will reign are a diverse and holy nation of priests whose sin debt was paid by the blood of the Lamb. (7:9) Henceforth all justice will be righteous. All that God intended will be clear and undeniable. All doctrinal issues settled. All false gods revealed as a lie. And these will reign with Christ for a thousand years. (20:6) Worthy is the Lamb! The threshold is shaking as this song in perfect harmonies reverberates throughout the heavenlies. But the chorus is just beginning to rise.

*<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* Joining this majestic chorus is more than ten thousands of ten thousands which is a hundred million, all with

**Commented [notes29]: Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

**Commented [notes30]: Romans 5:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

**Commented [notes31]: Isaiah 32:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.

**Commented [notes32]: Psalm 141:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

**Commented [notes33]: Exodus 35:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle;

**Commented [notes34]: Hebrews 2:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

**Commented [notes35]: Isaiah 6:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

**Commented [notes36]: Revelation 7:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

**Commented [notes37]: Revelation 20:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

their God given vocals designed for praise, and they aren't holding back. If they wondered what God was doing up to this point (1Peter 1:12), it is now becoming clear, and the glory of His nature is revealed in this Lamb standing among the elders. The say with a loud voice, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* The focus of heaven is Jesus! Heaven is fixated in awe on how worthy He is as He brings about the will of His Father with utter dedication and surrender to Him. It is this surrender to the goodness and righteousness of God that makes Him worthy to receive power, for He will only use power in a just and holy way. (John 5:22) He is worthy to receive all wealth, for His benevolence is always distributed in righteous ways. (1Chronicles 29:12; Romans 11:36) He is worthy to receive all wisdom, for He will only use that wisdom in accord with the goodness of God. (Daniel 2:20) He is worthy of all honor for He is the only One that obeyed the Father in every detail, and we are recipients of the fruit of that obedience. (John 17:4) He is worthy of all glory for He perfectly shows forth the attributes of God. (Hebrews 1:3) And He is worthy of all blessing, for the blessings He receives He distributes with wisdom. (Psalm 103:2)

Heaven is filled with resounding praise. It is rising to a crescendo! And now all created things that have breath, all beings that have lungs that bring air over their vocal chords, join the heavenly choir. <sup>13</sup> *And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"*

Narnia is not so farfetched after all. (Psalm 150:6) The birds will sing and the lions will roar and the dogs will howl, and we will join them all to praise God and the Lamb for His grace, mercy, love, and goodness. God used a gentle Lamb, the Lamb of God, to slay a dragon, to redeem us from the powerful chains of sin. (12:9-10) This is the eternal Thanksgiving! Wrong is righted. Evil is defeated. Goodness reigns. Truth prevails. *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"*

<sup>14</sup> *And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.* Those magnificent living creatures thunder out a resounding "Yes!" Which is the same as saying, "Let it be so!" The focus is Jesus. The worthy One! He does it all. What else is there to do but fall down and worship with the elders?

#### Questions

- 1 What brings unity to believers?
- 2 What should Jesus description have done for the recipients of the letters?
- 3 Why can't anyone open the scroll?
- 4 Why does John weep?
- 5 Why is Jesus able to open it?
- 6 Why do the 4 creatures and 24 elder sing?
- 7 Who joins them and why?

#### Commented [notes38]: 1 Peter 1:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

#### Commented [notes39]: John 5:22 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

#### Commented [notes40]: 1 Chronicles 29:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

#### Commented [notes41]: Romans 11:36 (ESV)

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

#### Commented [notes42]: Daniel 2:20 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.

#### Commented [notes43]: John 17:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

#### Commented [notes44]: Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

#### Commented [notes45]: Psalm 103:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,

#### Commented [notes46]: Psalm 150:6 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

#### Commented [notes47]: Revelation 12:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

<sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

- 8 Who else joins them and why?
- 9 How do the living beings respond?
- 10 What is the elders' final response?