

Levels and Postures of Worship

Revelation 5:1-14

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Douglas Copeland said: "We are created to worship. If we do not worship God, we will end up worshipping something else".

Revelation 5 is the ultimate description of worship in the Bible, packed with symbolism and practical application.

As we unpack it, we find different postures and levels of worship which help us understand what worship truly is.

Sometimes leading services there is a tension when I find myself saying 'let's stand to worship.' Aren't we worshipping before the music starts, or when we go home? Of course we are! So, you might find me saying 'Let's stand and worship God in song as the band lead us'.

Revelation 5 takes us on a journey of worship.

It all starts with the first verb:

“I SAW”

1. Worship starts with beholding God

Revelation 5:1

(NIVUK) 1 'Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.'

Seeing in our mind's eye that God is on the throne. We let our understanding of God fill our imagination with him. Just as John saw into the heavenlies, we have to conceptualise who it is we worship.

- Do we look at God enthroned in heaven?
- Do we see Jesus up close and personal in our mind's eye? – just like Martha described in her Baptism testimony.
- What about the Holy Spirit at work? As the creed says: 'With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified'

So, worship starts when we conceptualise some facet or aspect of the Trinity.

But as worship begins to rise in the heavenly throne room, we see the different sides of Jesus – He is Lion and he is Lamb. Just getting our heads round Jesus the conquering Lion, who sacrificed himself for our sakes – leads us to awe and wonder.

Contemplating his victory through sacrifice leads us to thanksgiving and praise.

As Rose shared this morning – depending on our situation or the challenges facing us, perhaps we need to focus on one or the other – more Lion or more Lamb.

2. The next worship verb in this passage: SING

Revelation 5:9

(NIVUK) 9 And they sang a new song, saying: ...

Singing bridges the gap between head and heart.

It is well known that singing helps with our cognition. Alzheimers do 'singing for the brain' in here sometimes. Musical notes and resonance are built into the fabric of the universe.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *Ainulindale*, portrays the world being sung into existence. The "morning stars singing together." ([Job 38:7](#))

The harmonic series and acoustic laws are hardwired into the cosmos, humans are merely discovering and giving shape to a musical structure that was already there.

The combination of words and music reflects God's creative design – we are aligning with the created order and our purpose to worship him.

There is a progression

- the four living creatures and elders sing
- thousands upon thousands of angels join in (100 million!)
- eventually every creature joins the chorus

And the central declaration is:

Revelation 5:12

(NIVUK) 12 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, ...

3. The next idea of worship we find in this passage is **SERVING** as a priest.

Revelation 5:10

(NIVUK) 10 'You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,' ...

Latreuō (λατρεύω) is one of the main biblical Greek words for worship/service. It *appears 21 times to shift "service" from physical temple rituals into an all-encompassing lifestyle of devotion and daily obedience.*

Romans 12:1

(NIVUK) 1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship (*latreia*).

Matthew 4:10

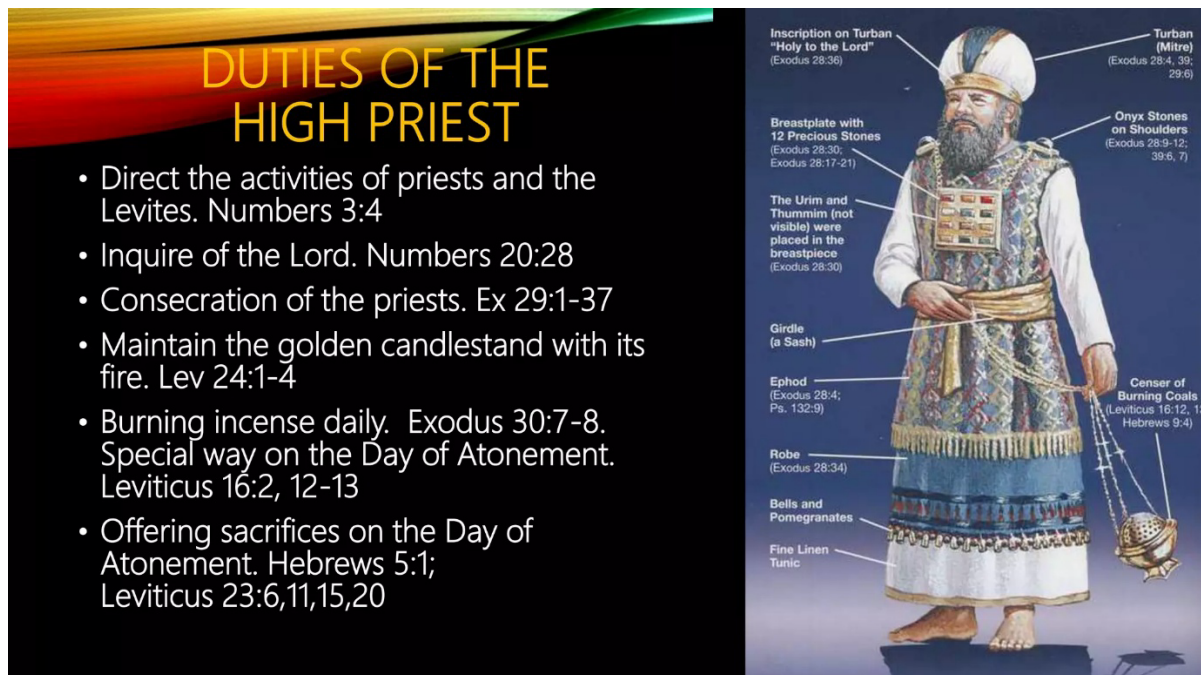
(NIVUK) 10 For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve (*latreuō*) him only."

Philippians 3:3

(NIVUK) 3 we who serve (*latreuō*) God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh –

So what does it mean for us to worship in service as Priests?

It means we approach the throne of grace, and offer prayers of intercession in worship. Priests pray for forgiveness and offer absolution (atonement). We tend to the people, we revere holiness. We lead each other in praise and worship. We put out the chairs, we clear the drains! We are set apart unto the Lord. It recognises that worship isn't for us to feel good – beyond seeing and singing, we now realise worship serves God and ministers to him.



4. The fourth word in this passage is perhaps the most profound - **SUBMIT**

Revelation 5:14

(NIVUK) ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, 'Amen', and the elders fell down and worshipped (proskyneō).

Proskyneō (προσκυνέω) means to to bow down and kiss. It's used 60 times in the New Testament, and 22 of those are in Revelation (about a third of all uses!)

John 4:23-24

(NIVUK) ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers (proskynētēs) will worship (proskyneō) the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers (proskyneō) the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshippers (proskyneō) must worship (proskyneō) in the Spirit and in truth.'

Submission is the next level of worship. Do we submit ourselves to him? Will we prostrate ourselves humbly before him?

The final level – **STAND**

Revelation 7:9-10 - The great multitude in white robes

Revelation 7:9-10

(NIVUK) 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.'

There was a word from Peter Reynolds at 'The Upper Room' Leaders meeting on Thursday. Pete and Barbie Reynolds were held prisoner by the Taliban but now thankfully released and back in Bath: '*Stand, and I will speak with you.*'

Does it mean, *take your stand*? Or, 'I stand in awe of you.'

We stand in reverent fear of God.

But we also take a stand against the devil and his schemes.

Ephesian 6:10-13

(NIVUK) ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Worship is also warfare. Read Revelation 8, which details the great tribulation. God's people need to be ready to put on our spiritual armour and take our stand.

5 levels of worship:

SEE, SING, SERVE, SUBMIT, STAND



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