



river west church

The Song of the Lamb

Revelation 15

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The Challenge of Worship in a Fallen World

This morning we return to a familiar theme in our study of Revelation; the worship that happens around the throne of God. Worship is a central theme of Revelation, and the people of God are meant to learn how to praise Him from the examples of Heavenly worship throughout the book.

For many Christians, worship seems to come naturally. It is second nature. Often, we find it easy and fitting to worship because the blessings of God in our lives are unmistakable. The response of praise is natural and appropriate. But, for many, worshipping God is a struggle. We come to church with optimism only to find that our worship is dry and disconnected. We long for the experience that others seem to have with the Lord. We can even become concerned that we don't experience the joy that we believe should mark the worship experience.

There are probably many reasons for this kind of experience. Perhaps the most common however is the toll that everyday life takes on the act of worship. We live in a world of injustice, suffering and heart-ache. It can be difficult to persevere in worship when life is falling apart around us. We can get so focused on what is happening in our life and in our world that it is nearly impossible to fix our gaze on God and His greatness. Ironically, this is when we need to worship the most.

The Model of Worship in Heaven

This is one of the great "life-giving" messages of Revelation. Revelation is constantly calling the people of God back to worship, because worship is the central act of the Christian, regardless of our circumstances. The Book of Revelation encourages us to look past the temporal and to fix our gaze on the eternal. While not ignoring the difficulties of life on earth, the worship of Heaven is occupied with loftier themes: the glory of God, His wonderful attributes and His awesome deeds.

This is exactly what we find in Revelation 15. John sees yet another "sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished" (15:1). The setting is the final wrath of God. The seven angels are preparing to pour out the seven last plagues on the earth. But then, the scene is interrupted, and John is given a totally different vision. He sees another praise service around the throne. The redeemed are standing on a "sea of glass mingled with fire", with harps in their hands, praising God for His amazing deeds. It's a powerful vision. The wrath of God is imminent, and what are the saints doing? They are worshipping the Lord! The reality of evil, injustice, and the obvious need for judgment (c.f. Rev. 13) are at the forefront, but the redeemed are focusing on God and His

character! They are so focused on the excellence of God that the difficulties they have overcome are no longer in view.

The Focus of Worship on the Lamb

This is one of the great truths of Christian worship. When we worship, we focus our attention on the Lamb of God; who He is and what He is doing! Worship involves a humble acknowledgment that the only true solution to the problems of our world rest in the just and perfect action of God in Christ.

In Revelation 15, the worshippers are described as “those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name”. They are “over-comers”. They have experienced victory in the face of the temptation, deception, and persecution of the evil of our world. But as they worship, not a word is said about their own accomplishments. Attention is focused entirely on the perfect character and action of God through Christ. The saints have conquered not by their own might, but because the Lamb has been victorious. They sing the “song of the Lamb” to declare that they participate in His victory by faith (Rev. 12:11).

This morning, we are going to look to God’s Word to encourage our growth as worshippers. We are going to fix our eyes on the truth of God’s amazing work of redemption and judgment in Christ! We are going celebrate that redemption in our own lives and look forward in faith to the day when God will bring to completion His redemption and judgment. My prayer is that more and more, our worship will resemble the worship that will happen for all eternity around the throne of God!