

Worthy of Worship?

Introduction - Living with the Emperor

Everyone in Ephesus, and other cities in the Roman empire was expected to:



Temple of Emperor Trajan (98-117AD)

- participate in festivals honoring the emperor
- offer incense on altars carried by priests to declare that Caesar was Lord
- make sacrifices to the emperor, and eat the sacrificed meat.
- bow to the ground before his statue or "image"
- offer incense to Caesar before entering the city.
- obey Caesar without question.
- acknowledge the authority of the emperor when conducting business or shopping in the market.
- stop at his altars to acknowledge his "lordship,"
- acknowledge the emperor as the provider of life before drawing water from public fountains

The big question is, as a Christian, would you find this awkward? You should! Because no matter how high the Emperor considered himself, Jesus is higher! He is the King of Kings, the Emperor of Emperors... and John's vision re-inforces that in a most unusual way...

Read Revelation 4

One of the biggest dangers in reading Revelation is to focus on the details, without actually getting the "big picture." When you visit an art gallery, it's important to stand back and take in the overall impression of a painting. It's the same here... though the images are painted with words!

1. Stand back two metres! What's the big picture this chapter presents us with?

Where does the doorway lead?

In a sentence, what scene is this chapter describing?

What impression do you get of the one who sits on the throne?

Without knowing exactly what the "living creatures" represent, what are they doing?

Here's a thought...

Surely it can't be this obvious... but what if the four "living creatures" simply represent "living creatures"? Lion, Ox, Man and Eagle are the most impressive and strongest of the creatures... and yet when they're face to face with God, they fall before him in worship!

Why is God worthy of worship?

What does our sin cause us to do with our worship instead? (Romans 1: 24,25)

What will be different about heaven (according to John's vision)?

In a nutshell, every living creature, together with the 24 elders (who probably represent the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of the church) will fall before God in worship... the creator and sustainer, in whom we have our very being. But there's more...



Behold the Lamb...

Go back and re-read Revelation 3:21. Where is Jesus, and what is he doing? **Now read Revelation 5.** Again, step back from the details and try to gain a sense of the majesty, and surprise, of the picture the vision is painting. Look at the throne. What do you see there?

What incredible clash of imagery do you see in verses 5 and 6?

Can you explain this?

Why can't the "scroll" be opened?

What makes the lamb worthy to open the scroll? (We'll see in the next section that the scroll represents God's judgement!)

How many times does the chapter mention that the lamb was "slain"? What is the significance of this?

What three things has the blood of the lamb achieved? What is this imagery referring to in "real" terms?

Read the "heavenly hymn" in verses 12 to 14, and compare it to the similar section in chapter 4. Why is even the similar "form" of words in these two chapters incredible in itself?

Why is Jesus "worthy of worship?"

If you were a believer in the days of John and you knew that the next knock on the door could be the Roman authorities asking you to renounce Christ and worship Caesar as God, how would these two chapters help you?

How do the lessons of this passage apply to us today?

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne (Rev 3:21)

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. 2And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 6Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits^[1] of God sent out into all the earth. 7He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." 11Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" 13Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" 14The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The incredible centre of Christianity - the great "Lion" worthy of worship is actually the "sacrificial lamb" who gave up his life for the sake of his people.