

Worship

Revelation 4, 5.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

I would make a remark or two in regard to the subject of that hymn just sung (102), connecting it with the object of being together in worship; and I would look for the light on the subject that these chapters throw on worship. The whole of chapter 4 presents the glory of Jehovah-el-Shaddai, the Lord God Almighty, and presents it evidently as connected with every scene in which He has displayed it in creation. The rainbow, the heads of creation, the throne, and the elders connected with it, surrounding, the throne; but what we know of Him upon that throne brings in more than the statement that all things were created by Him and for His pleasure. And if so, it proves that He would have us see that He cannot stop in creation, and that not only is this One Jehovah-el-Shaddai, but also the God in relationship with His people. What I find so peculiarly blessed in this portion is, not so much the glory of the scene in Rev. 4, as the form it takes of a background for what follows in Rev. 5. No sooner is the mind in the scene of glory than we find One there to whom are reserved certain things. God had got a reserved book in His right hand. You might know me, but if I had a book in my hand you might not know anything about that. There was a book in the hand of Him that sat on the throne, and it was the question who should open it; and not one creature being found worthy even to look on it, this made John weep. It was connecting that which God had reserved for that One (the alone worthy) with a creature caught up from all the misery below, and asking, "Could such cause the secrets of God to flow forth?"

The thing that comes out here is the feebleness of John; and then, that the Lord is the object of worship.

The elder says, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Not as Son of God could He have opened the secrets of God to His people had He not prevailed as Son of man. He goes up and takes the book, and then praise flows forth. We ought to remark, that all the worship in this chapter is not only the worship of the Person of the Lord, but worship because He has become the link for letting all the thoughts of God flow down. He says, as it were, "I know the secrets of my Father's heart, and I have a right to open, and let all the secret river of refreshment flow out."

We see many companies here surrounding the Person of the Lord, and all manifesting the same delight in combining to remind Him of His worthiness. In verse 8, we find the same company as in the preceding chapter — the beasts (the living creatures), and the twenty-four elders; and they sing a song that is peculiar. Next, the angels form another choir, and sing (or say) their song; and then "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," utter theirs. The songs differ; but the song of each is entirely about God and the Lamb. Not one there has a word to say about self. How altogether out of place it would be for any creature to talk of self up there! And why out of place? Because there can be nothing of self to think about. Another will occupy every thought. There would be a shudder through every breast there if any talked about "I;" and this gives liberty to any one now, who would be delivered from that talking of "I."

If I speak about myself, I can only say of myself what came from Job; if I speak of Another, I shall have what these companies here have to speak about. Some could speak of the blood; others do not speak of redemption only, but of the Person of the Redeemer, and of the glory that flows out of it. How wonderful that we can speak of the Lord always in connection with ourselves! "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." We may say in heaven, "He washed me in His own blood;" and anything else that brings out the ruin of the creature, and the riches of the grace displayed in Christ, for it is to His glory. In the wide universe now, there are only two who know what the mercy and compassion of God are (God and the poor sinner); but then it will all come out.

I can speak of mercy, not as an angel, but as one who has got the taste of it. Before I knew it, I could not speak of it as a tasted thing. When Israel danced before the calf, God came in, saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Bear in mind, that it is the Lamb's glory in their salvation that is for ever to occupy the heart and mind of every poor sinner saved by grace. There in God's presence John finds a whole company, every one of whom is occupied in ascribing glory to the Lamb. In one song he hears a note brought out that must have cheered him more than all the others. He too could join in saying, "He loved me and washed me."

What a poor thing John must have felt himself in connection with this scene, when a door was opened in heaven, and he found himself up there. Ah! and what a poor thing he found he was. God was arranging things to bring out bright rays about the Son of His love, to show him that no creature could fill the place the Lord fills. John must have thought, "What a poor simple thing I was, when God sent for me to let me see He had reserved One alone to open all His secrets. My only answer was, 'No man is found worthy;' and then I wept. Just there I wept, where there was a Man, and more than a Man, on the throne going to show that He alone had the whole thing in His own hands!"

How great the grace of God, wanting to let John know it, taking him up there, saying, "A poor feeble thing like you, is to know that My eye has gone right to the end of time in connection with My Son; I want you to know it, and to show you that My Son is the channel through whom all blessing is to flow out. He is the One who knows all about the land of Egypt, and the waste, howling wilderness. He will show how He knows all about it, and will be the connecting link to let My love flow down." Ah! we do not enough calculate on that living Man on the throne, whose eye is ever down here, and whose sweetest privilege it is to be the connecting link between us and God. Ah!! in connection with the incompetency of man, Christ the living Man is the person pictured before me; He is the competent One. Surely, knowing Him thus our hearts can go up in worship, having a deeper and fuller character. I can say, "Christ has overcome the world; Christ has done everything for me: now I have to go through the wilderness for Him." As I go along I shall find difficulties and failure; but Christ says, "I am above it all. As you go through it all, remember Me, and you will be able to sing a song where John wept. I want to let you know all that I am for you now, and that I passed through everything for you." What we need, first, is the lesson that John learnt, that no creature can hand up anything to God — that the creature has nothing save what God has given in the Son of His love; and that He, the alone worthy One, must be between all that we are, as the connecting link for our own worship. Pitiful things as we are, we have got a heart in heaven, and we can use the name of the Lamb slain, as the channel of all blessing. All through, it tells out the tale of God's love, but there is the spring from whence comes all worship.