

Key Verses, Revelation 5:9-10

⁹ 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, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

People from All the Nations of the World Are in Heaven

Have you ever had the opportunity to go into a place that is the nerve center of all activity such as the control tower at an airport that allows you to see all of the incoming and outgoing flights, or maybe a command center that allows you to see military operations? At least one commentator suggests that Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation give us a view of the "nerve center" of all creation as the Apostle John opens the throne room of God to us to see our Lord's command center. Revelation is a book that, among other things, gives us a vision of God in heaven and saints from all nations worshipping Him.

In Chapters 4 and 5 the Holy Spirit through John allows us to look inside God's glorious throne room. We see the throne with the four living creatures, the elders and of course Jesus Christ, the Lamb. In verse 9 the living creatures and the elders sing a song that extols the Lamb's sacrifice, that He is worthy of opening the scroll and that He bought people from every tribe, language, people and nation.

In the OT, God chose the nation of Israel as His own people. And He chose Israel to keep the oath that He made with Abraham (Deuteronomy 7:7ff). God met with His people in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:9) and later in the temple built by Solomon (1 Kings 5-6). God set Israel apart as His particular chosen nation. With the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel went out to all the nations (Matthew 28:19-20). The gospel does not reside in any particular geographical nation or ethnic people, but it has gone out and continues to go out to all the countries of the world in obedience to the Great Commission.

This vision from Revelation ought to encourage us to obey our Lord and Savior's command to evangelize the lost. Do you have this text from Revelation in view when you're sharing the gospel? That God has called people from every country into His kingdom? That one day we'll all be together from all these countries in heaven worshipping the Lamb on His throne? Cristo Redentor is a ministry to people from "every tribe, language, people and nation" so that they will repent, so that they will be saved and so that they will live forever in heaven. And what unites us is worship of God through our union with Christ. So people from all nations occupy heaven...

Because the Lamb Bought Them with His Blood

The residents of heaven are there because the Lamb bought them with His own blood. Verse 9 clearly states that Jesus was slain and bought us with His blood. Our ticket to heaven, so to speak, was bought by someone else, the Lamb who is the Lord Jesus.

The Bible teaches that the shedding of blood is necessary to satisfy God's just wrath. God had to kill animals to dress Adam and Eve in skins (Genesis 3:21). God commanded the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) to kill a bull and a goat for the sins of His people (Hebrews 9:22). There is no way to disconnect the shedding of blood and the forgiveness of sins.

So what did Jesus do? He offered the blood from His own body on the cross to satisfy His father's wrath so that we don't suffer His just punishment against us. Jesus Christ purchased us with His blood in order to save us from what we deserve, an eternity in Hell separated from God. He redeemed us by forgiving our sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

We need to be careful not to minimize, trivialize or take for granted what Jesus has done. Without the Lamb's blood, there's no hope for us. That's the reason that He's worthy to take the scroll and open the seals (v 9). In our postmodern world acknowledgment of sin seems to be the most difficult obstacle for a lot of people. Our proclamation of the gospel must include the call to repentance and faith in the Lamb and His sacrifice.

The Lamb bought with His own blood people from every tribe, language, people and nation...

And He Bought Them in order to Rule with Him

Verse 10 says something astounding and marvelous. It says that Jesus has made us a kingdom and priests to our God and that we will rule with Him. It is such a fabulous promise that it's hard for us to believe it.

The promise of a priesthood is based in the OT (Exodus 19:5-6). We know that sadly the history of the people of Israel is one of disobedience and ultimate exile by the Babylonians. But that exile points us to the good news: we serve a God who loves us so much that He redeems us and seeks a relationship with us. He doesn't abandon us, He doesn't leave us in our sins and He doesn't give us what we deserve. Instead of punishing us eternally, He saves us, He restores us and He gives us the tremendous privilege of ruling with Him. Each believer is a priest offering praise and worship to God.

What do we do as priests? We are to worship God and proclaim the good news of Christ (1 Peter 2:9). Our job until the Second Coming is to evangelize those who don't know who Jesus is. It is "to proclaim the excellencies" (declare the praises) of this wonderful God whom we serve.

What does it mean to rule with God? To worship Him (see verse 14) and to see His face constantly (Revelation 22:3-5). How much time do we spend meditating on these things? Sometimes we move from one extreme to the other: we're totally absorbed with the things of heaven so we don't pay attention to this world, or we're totally in this world with no thought of eternity in heaven. This text, and in fact the entire book of Revelation, would suggest a balanced perspective of working in this world while contemplating the next.

Don't be reluctant to read the book of Revelation and delight in its message. Tune out the noise of all the speculation about "prophecies" in Revelation and tune into the book itself. If you want a view of the saints from around this globe worshiping God and ruling with Him, read Revelation. If you want encouragement to evangelize, read Revelation. If you want to understand the delight of heaven and the dreadful eternity God has saved you from through Christ, read Revelation. If you want to be encouraged to persevere, read Revelation. People from all nations will be around the throne worshiping God and reigning with Him because of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Will you be one of them? Repent, trust in Christ and turn to Him in this New Year. There's nothing more important for you to do.