

Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe

When God Finally Answers Generations of Prayers for Justice

Revelation 5:9b-14

Unanswered prayers: what happens to them? As we open to Rev. 5, we find the answer to one of the great mysteries of God's Word: Where do all our prayers go? After we prayed them, God heard them, and then what?

What Happens to All Our Prayers

Do prayers become like deleted emails? Does God get them, see them on His screen, read them; and then just hits the trash button, and poof, they are gone?

No, that is never the image God wants in our minds.

Prayers to God, from all His saints (which includes all believers of all time from Adam and Eve, to the final redeemed person of the Millennium) are so special: God has collected them, and continues to collect them.

As we open to Rev. 5:8, think for a moment at what it means to pray. You and I have been invited to lay at the feet of Almighty God, the deepest longings of our hearts, expressed through our prayers. And God Almighty hears them, and keeps them always before His Throne, where they are presently found this very moment.

God Collects and Saves Every Prayer from His Saints

That is what we are going to see as we read Revelation. Wow, I wonder how many prayers I have there right now? How many do you have? How much do we pray, since God loves our prayers so much He collects them?

Please stand with me, and follow along as we read Rev. 5:8-6:1 (NKJV):

Now when He had **taken the scroll**, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.** ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to **take the scroll**,

And to **open its seals**;

For You were slain,

And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;

And we shall reign on the earth.”

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom,

And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And 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, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power

Be to Him who sits on the throne,

And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

¹⁴ Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” **And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.**

6 Now I saw when **the Lamb opened one of the seals**; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a **voice like thunder**, “Come and see.”

Pray

Did you notice the clear message of that sequence of descriptions John is guided in presenting for us Christ's Church?

God is Showing the Plan For His Wrath against Sin

In Rev. 4-5 we are in the worship-filled atmosphere of Heaven. We can see the three elements of the flow in these chapters of what God wants us to see and understand: first we are shown:

1. The Throne and the surrounding Worship; then
2. The Lamb that was slain (Jesus Christ) is introduced; and then
3. The Scroll and the bowls of prayers.

In Rev. 4:1-5:7, we are surrounded by the Throne, awesome angelic creatures, white-robed saints, myriads of worshiping angels, and the breathtaking glory of God sparkling all around us.

Then, in Rev. 5:8 the Lamb who was slain for sinners, steps before the Throne. There is a scroll that we are told was at the right hand of the Almighty. Then in our text today we see that the scroll is given to Christ. This scroll with seals (which we will soon find out is

the exact script for all the events recorded in Rev. 6-20) is placed into the Hands of Christ, the Lamb slain for sinners.

Then, John is instructed to point out to us the prayers of all the ages. They are not from just the church. In Heaven God widens our understanding and says they are the prayers of all the saints.

Old & New Testament Believers are Called Saints

Believers are called saints from the very first prophecy in God's Word (Enoch's which says: "the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints").

"Saints" is what God calls His people from Deuteronomy through Zechariah. Those saints are also named as some who were raised by the earthquake at Christ's crucifixion; and who later step out of their graves at the same time as Christ on Sunday morning (Matthew 27:52).

So the saints of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament all have their prayers collected and held before the Throne of the Almighty God. But, what was not clearly explained in the Old Testament, becomes very clear through Christ in the New Testament.

Remember how Jesus left a model prayer for us His followers? We all know it, we've prayed it, and we believe it is part of His plan for us.

The second statement of that model (or Lord's) prayer is the plea: "Thy Kingdom Come".

Thy Kingdom Come

Most of us have only a slight understanding of just how serious that request really is. Martin Luther, over 500 years ago called this that "terrible petition" that invited God's to powerfully control our lives.

Each time we pray this personally, it is a request for God to Rule my life. That is how it applies to us as believers.

But, what else have all of us saints been asking asked God to do?

Sometimes we forget to connect the dots, and see the much bigger picture. Thy Kingdom Come is a cry to Almighty God, from all of us believers, throughout all of the centuries since Christ instructed us to pray that way.

But what are we asking? And, when does God answer one of the most repeated requests, by more of His saints than nearly any other?

Revelation 5 explains the manner and timing of His answer to all those prayers.

Why Doesn't God DO Something

Have you ever heard someone say, "Why doesn't God DO something? Look at all the oppressed; look at all the innocent people massacred; look at all the injustices around us? Why doesn't God do something?"

Well, as we come to Revelation 5 we find that God has done something all along: He has collected those prayers, deposited them right in front of His Throne; and finally, in His perfect timing, God shows us His response.

Perhaps the best way to answer what God will do about all of the horrors of sins that have run amok through humanity for thousands of years is that God writes down a fifteen-chapter description of His perfect answer to mankind's wicked rebellion against His rule. God's answer to sin is the exact content we have before us in our Bibles we call Rev. 6-20.

Revelation Explains: When God's Wrath Comes

In Revelation 5:8 we see for the first time, where all the prayers have gone. Every prayer from the very first prayers of humanity lifted up from Adam and Eve, through all the Old Testament era, and on through the New Testament era, and right up to the most recent prayer being lifted at this moment around the world by saints like us today: EVERY prayer has landed in one spot.

God is amazing. He does not forget us, He never misplaces our requests, and He doesn't ever ignore us.

God Almighty is amazingly patient. Paul explains that all of the hardness of every sinful heart is "treasuring up" wrath from God (Romans 2:5). God stores His wrath, like an electrical charge, building up until with blinding light, blazing power, and a deafening roar, His wrath begins to stroke downward like a deadly thunderstorm.

We have now come to the final element of worship in Revelation 5:9-14. As we earlier studied Rev. 4-5 we found that these chapters describe worship that surrounds God at this very moment and into the future. That element is:

True Biblical Worship: Understands God's Wrath is Against Un-Confessed, Un-Forsaken, and Un-Forgiven Sins (from Revelation 5:9b-14)

The first warning from God to the world, about His immense wrath against sin, was when He destroyed all but eight humans with a flood of water, in the days of Noah. The global flood is a critical doctrine in the plan of God. That is why that Flood has been so belittled by those who want to push God far away, out of touch, and not an Almighty cosmic interrupter of humanity's unbroken sinfulness.

The second, and mightiest warning from God about how severely He looks upon mankind's sin was demonstrated when God showed the world His abundant mercy and grace by pouring out His wrath against sin onto Jesus as He hung upon that cross.

Then, God has patiently waited while His saints have crossed the globe, sharing the Good News. Explaining how to avert the wrath of God forever against sin. Now, God is going to start pouring out His stored up wrath against the earth-dwellers here in chapter 5, and then finally, in Rev 20, against all sinners who have not enrolled in God's amnesty for sinners program, by casting all un-forgiven sinners into Hell forever.

God connects for us, in Revelation 5, the Tribulation's judgments with the worship of the redeemed around the Throne, mixed with the prayers of all the saints.

Paul explains the wrath of God in Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

Jesus returns in the blazing fire of wrath against sin in II Thessalonians 1:7b-8 when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 6-20 completely fits as a result of the finished work of Christ upon the Cross. He stands with His arms open to the world and pours out His righteous and holy wrath against sinners who will not turn to Him away from their sins.

This final element that God reveals in Revelation 4 & 5 about True Biblical Worship is also the least understood. God actually uses worship as the context for all the rest of the Book of Revelation.

From Rev. 5:9, look down to Rev. 6:1, the seals that unleash God's wrath, are tied to the scroll introduced to us in chapter 5.

So what exactly was Jesus as the Lamb surrounded by worship worthy to do? Unleash the horrors of the Great Tribulation.

What is the Tribulation? For any student of the Bible you know that God has promised a time when He will judge the inhabitants of the earth for their rebellion. It is a time when God at last pours out direct wrath upon the people who have followed Satan in his rebellion against God. That time period, described in the Bible as the “great tribulation” is a time that can only be summarized by some:

Staggering Numbers

In the Great Tribulation more than 2 ½ million die every day for 42 months.

In the German death camp called Auschwitz just over a thousand died each day.

That means during the Tribulation, 2,500 times as many people will die every day.

Or to put it in Auschwitz terms—the number of people that died in every 24 hour day at Auschwitz will die **every 15 seconds** in the Great Tribulation!

Or in other terms living on earth will be like living in an Auschwitz death camp—and in death toll there will be the equivalent deaths of the entire WWII Holocaust **every other day, for 42 months!**

A brief look through the pages of Revelation starting in chapters six, describe the living hell you can avoid if you are saved this morning.

Here are seven elements of the end of days, which only a few of the dreadfully detailed disasters that take place during the Tribulation:

1. **One out of every two people will die** (see Rev. 6:8 and onward), some through the ravages of war, others by starvation, and amazingly many others by the ‘beasts of the earth’. So, whether by death that come instantly and thus less dreaded or a slow and painful death that is lingering and agonizing—50 % of all people will die.
 - The world's population was 7,034,897,482 yesterday, so that means at least 3,517,448,761 will die.
 - That amounts to just about eleven times the current population of the United States. Can you imagine that?
 - And remember that the population of the world is doubling every 39.5 years. So every day the number of people who will die becomes larger and larger.
2. **One third of all vegetation will be burned up.** All grass, every tree, everything green will be destroyed.

Revelation 8:7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

3. **The sun and the moon will be darkened** as nature goes into revolt.

Revelation 8:12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

4. **The gates of hell will open** and hordes of locusts, the size of horses, will come upon the earth. Those locusts will be allowed to sting men like scorpions and the pain will last for five months. The Bible says men will beg God to let them die but they will not die.

Revelation 9:3-6 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

5. **There will be worldwide famine unlike anything the world has ever seen.**

Matthew 24:7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Revelation 6:5-6 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

Revelation 18:8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day--death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

6. **There will be a world war so bloody** that the blood of those killed in battle will flow for two hundred miles, splashing up to the height of the bridle of a horse in the valley of Jezreel. This will be the Battle of Armageddon.

Revelation 14:20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

7. All told, during the Great Tribulation, as many as **half of all the people on the earth will be killed.**

Now do you see why God refers to the Rapture as a 'blessed hope'? It is because the Tribulation to come is so horrible! God explains that we are gone and will escape everything, right?

Yes, exactly, we will miss every part of the TRIBULATION, but we will probably go through some of the worst days we have ever seen before it starts.

Back to unanswered prayers: Revelation 5 reminds us that God collects those prayers, deposits them right in front of His Throne; and finally, in His perfect timing, God gives His response.

Only we, as God's servants, understand that the Tribulation is to display His Wrath against un-confessed, un-forsaken, and un-forgiven sins.

That is why Jesus left us with a challenge, a request to pray for each day we live:

Thy Kingdom Come

Thy Kingdom Come is a cry to Almighty God, from all of us believers, throughout all of the centuries since Christ instructed us to pray that way.

Why not join me in offering that prayer as another deposit before the Throne of God Almighty.