

The Nature of Yeshua in the Revelation Given to John

(CJB/CJSB). The four living creatures of Revelation 4:8 speak forth the word of Isaiah 6:3.⁴⁸ It is unavoidable that the elders direct worship toward the One on the throne: “and will worship the one living into the ages of the ages” (Revelation 4:10, Brown and Comfort),⁴⁹ *kai proskunēsousin tō zōnti eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn* (καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων).⁵⁰

Contextually, it is clear that the figure or entity being worshipped by the elders in Heaven is the One God of Israel: “You are worthy, *ADONAI Eloheinu*, to have glory, honor and power, because you created all things—yes, because of your will they were created and came into being!” (Revelation 4:11, CJB/CJSB). The presence of *ho Kurios kai ho Theos hēmōn* (ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν) or “our Lord and God” is thought by many Revelation commentators to have some deliberate subversion of the Emperor cult.⁵¹ The Roman historian Suetonius recorded, regarding the Emperor Domitian, how “‘Our Lord and God instructs you to do this!’ and ‘Lord and God’ became his regular title both in writing and conversation” (*Domitian* 13).⁵² For the original late First Century and early Second Century recipients of the Book of Revelation—many of whom were former pagans—they surely needed to be reminded how the One God of Israel was the Only True Lord, and not any of the Caesars.⁵³ Those who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being uncreated and integrated into the Divine Identity, do so because of the relationship between Yeshua and this One God of Israel—particularly as He is worshipped right along with Him (Revelation 5:14).

Revelation 5:1-14

“Worship of God and the Lamb Before the Heavenly Throne”

“I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, ‘Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.’ And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.’ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the

⁴⁸ “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3).

⁴⁹ Brown and Comfort, 862.

⁵⁰ The Sacred Name ISR Scriptures (2009) strangely renders Revelation 4:10 with “and bow before Him who lives forever and ever.” Normally, the ISR Scriptures renders the verb *proskuneō* or “worship” in association with YHWH as “worship,” but in association with the Messiah as “bow down.”

⁵¹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 140; Aune, 52a:310-311; Keener, *Revelation*, 176; Witherington, *Revelation*, 118.

⁵² Suetonius: *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin Books, 1957), 309.

⁵³ The thought of Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 119 is,

“God alone is exalted on his throne. The universe came into being through him and everything should subserve his holy purpose—a sentiment basic to the monotheistic Jewish-Christian tradition taught to pagans (1 C. 8:6).”

sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”

The scene of the Throne in Heaven continues from Revelation ch. 4, as Yeshua the Messiah, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, is witnessed to be the only One worthy to open the book and break the seals (Revelation 5:1-5). The Lamb, who has the seven Spirits of God directly associated with Him, is worthy because of His being slain (Revelation 5:6-7). The twenty-four elders present issue some kind of veneration toward the Lamb: “the twenty-four elders fell before the lamb” (Revelation 5:8, Brown and Comfort),⁵⁴ *hoi eikosi tessares presbuteroi epesan enōpion tou arniou* (οἱ ἑκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου). Praise is issued regarding the work that had been performed by the Lamb, which obviously involves the sacrifice of Yeshua for human sin (Revelation 5:9-10).

The angels in Heaven are also seen exalting the Lamb, which particularly involves the exclaim, “The Lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12, HCSB). The parallel of what was confessed earlier, regarding the One God of Israel, cannot go unnoticed: “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created” (Revelation 4:11). There are legitimate textual reasons to wonder why the Lamb is given the same sort of praise as the One God of Israel. Would a supernatural but ultimately created being or entity be permitted to receive such accolades?

Every created thing then issues praise to the Lamb: “Then 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!’” (Revelation 5:13, NIV). It is stated that *pan ktisma* (πᾶν κτίσμα) or “every created thing” (NASU) gives praise to the Lamb, with a scene reminiscent of Philippians 2:10: “so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” It is proper to recognize—with “every created thing” specified—if the Lamb is among such created things, or is something decisively different. Would a created being or entity be expected to be associated with the veneration of Isaiah 45:23, present in Philippians 2:10 (discussed previously)?

Previously in Revelation 5:8, it was only said that “the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb” (RSV), the verb *piptō* (πίπτω) meaning, “fall down, throw oneself to the ground as a sign of devotion or humility, before high-ranking persons or divine beings” (BDAG).⁵⁵ Falling down before someone does not always require or imply worship. In Revelation 5:14, however, there is no dispute that the veneration being issued is worship: “And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen!’ And the elders fell down and worshiped” (TLV), *kai ho presbuteroi epesan kai prosekunesan* (καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν καὶ προσεκύνησαν).⁵⁶ Here, the verb *piptō* is used in conjunction with *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω), “to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete

⁵⁴ Brown and Comfort, 863.

⁵⁵ BDAG, 815.

⁵⁶ The Sacred Name ISR Scriptures (2009) renders Revelation 5:14 with “And the twenty-four elders fell down and bowed before Him.” Normally, the ISR Scriptures renders the verb *proskuneō* or “worship” in association with YHWH as “worship,” but in association with the Messiah as “bow down.” Revelation 5:13 makes it clear that the veneration involves “Him sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb, be the blessing and the respect and the esteem and the might, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13, ISR Scriptures). This is an indication that this version’s translators or publisher, are unsure about the kind of veneration issued to the Messiah.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Revelation Given to John

dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (*fall down and*) *worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully*" (BDAG).⁵⁷

There is no ambiguity in Revelation 5:14 that Yeshua the Messiah is being worshipped, a clear sign of Divinity. Yet, worship of Yeshua the Son does not take place independent from worship of God the Father, as it is issued jointly "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 5:13). Still, to worship Yeshua the Messiah—even in association with God the Father—would be idolatry if Yeshua the Messiah were not genuinely God and integrated into the Divine Identity. As Fee explains, "the extremely high Christology is unmistakable, in that the praise that follows is that which can be given to God alone, or else one's praise borders on a new form of idolatry, where the one and only God is now seen as two separate deities."⁵⁸ Unfortunately in much of contemporary Christianity, there are forms of what can be labeled as "Jesus-olatry," where the Son is worshiped almost exclusively, and the Father is quantitatively left out of the picture. Worship of Yeshua the Son in Revelation 5:14 takes place in association with worship of God the Father.

Revelation 6:15-17

"The Wrath of God and the Lamb"

"Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"

In the scene of the apocalypse, within the Book of Revelation, it is witnessed how humanity at large—and most especially kings and rulers—are seen cowering in fear at the judgment being issued against them by the God of Israel (Revelation 6:15). They are seen trying to hide in caves and among rocks, and so they cry out to the terrestrial elements, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Revelation 6:16, NIV). There is a specific Isaianic background for this:

"Enter the rock and hide in the dust from the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty...In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, in order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble" (Isaiah 2:9, 20-21).

That God the Father and Yeshua the Lamb are both involved with the wrath that is being dispensed here, is clear enough from the text. What is not as clear, is what is intended by the people of the Earth exclaiming, "because the great day of Their wrath has come!" (Revelation 6:17, HCSB), *hoti ēlthen hē hēmera hē megalē tēs orgēs autōn* (ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν). It would be entirely legitimate for the people of the Earth to instead say, "for the great day of God's wrath has come" (Revelation 6:17, NASU modified), rather than speak in the plural, "for the great day of their wrath has come" (Revelation 6:17, NASU original). In fact the Textus Receptus has, "For the great day of His wrath has come" (Revelation 6:17, NKJV), which has *tēs orgēs autou* (τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ) in the singular, rather than *tēs orgēs autōn* (τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν) in the plural. Metzger explains the variants which appear in witnesses of Revelation 6:17:

⁵⁷ Ibid., 882.

⁵⁸ Fee, *Revelation*, 88.