



Who Is Worthy To Worship?

Revelation 5:7-14 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. (8) And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and fourand twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. (9) And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (10) And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (11) And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts 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 that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, 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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (14) And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Who are the 24 elders? They said they have been redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation by the blood of Lamb. That tells me they are saints of God – us. Perhaps the number 24 represents the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 disciples of Jesus – but we do know they have been redeemed by Jesus, and here they are in heaven worshipping God.

I wonder, what was it that made them worthy to be the ones to worship Him in heaven?

I have heard people say, when something bad has happened to them, “I don’t know what I did to deserve this”. We also think the opposite when someone is especially blessed: “What did they do to deserve that?” It’s in the song “Butterfly Kisses” – “*after all that I’ve done wrong, I must have done something right, to deserve a hug every morning, and butterfly kisses at night.*”

Is that really how it is? Do bad things really only happen to bad people? Do good things really only happen to good people? We know that it isn’t true. All the time we see wonderful people have terrible things happen to them. We also see people that we would consider not very nice at all seem to have it so easy. It just doesn’t seem fair!

Maybe it is our innate sense that the wicked will be punished that makes us think this way. When there is a terrible natural disaster, like a tsunami or devastating earthquake, we like to think it was because the people affected were ungodly or wicked or worshipping false gods, and we look for and cling to stories where the righteous were miraculously saved.

This is what Jesus said about people who were killed, either by murder or by natural disaster:

Luke 13:1-5 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (2) And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? (3) I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (4) Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? (5) I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

He said it was NOT because they were wicked or had done something wrong. He then went on to tell a parable in answer to why these things had happened:

Luke 13:6-9 He also spoke this parable: "A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. (7) Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking

fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' (8) But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. (9) And if it bears fruit, *well*. But if not, after that you can cut it down.' "

To bring fruit from us, Jesus has to dig about us, or make us unsettled, breaking up the ground where we are, but He also has to dung us – we get manure thrown on us, if you like, because that is what brings growth and fruit. Not too much, as too much fertilizer will kill a plant, but just the right amount that we need.

It doesn't take too much reading in the Bible to find people who had things happen to them they didn't deserve. Look at the Apostle Paul. Not only did he have a "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan, to buffet him", he had all sorts of bad things happen to him, and yet he was a great man of God.

He didn't just walk about from place to place healing people, evangelizing them, and starting churches. Opposition didn't just disappear as he turned up. Life was only a rose garden for Paul because it was full of thorns.

Look at one incident:

Acts 28:1-3 Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. (2) And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. (3) But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid *them* on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

First of all, they were shipwrecked. They had to endure 14 solid days of a wild storm, then the ship sank in the midst of this storm. They finally were safe on land and a snake bit him. You are thinking, "but he survived all that". Yes, he did survive, but he still had to go through it all. He wasn't exempt from the storm, the shipwreck, the rain and the cold. You would have thought that God would have found a less painful way for Paul to travel. See what the people thought:

Acts 28:4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."

They were the same as us. Bad things happened to him, so he must be bad.

The snake bite didn't kill him, but it must have hurt, yet we see it was part of God's plan.

There are lots of other examples I could give you, but we can't discuss the topic of undeserved suffering without at least mentioning Job. Job was described **BY GOD** as a blameless and upright man:

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

Yet in one day Job lost his five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she asses, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, a very great number of servants, seven sons and three daughters. Then his wife turned on him, and his so-called friends added to his woes.

Think about it. Job lost:

1. his livelihood
2. all his assets and finances
3. his children
4. his health
5. the support of his wife
6. the support of his friends.

Did Job deserve this? No! He was a blameless and upright man.

Look at what his friends said:

- a. Eliphaz – blamer. Only the wicked suffer, so it must be all your own fault.

b. Bildad – the answer man. If only you had done the right thing, responded the right way or used the right formula, you would have been alright.

c. Zohar – the bully. You are obviously self-righteous, so you need to repent, as you are obviously inferior and have been rejected by God.

There is great focus in the world today on knowledge. We are so intoxicated with how clever we are. KNOWLEDGE IS KING, WISDOM IS A PAUPER. This can also affect churches, and they start to rely on systems and programs, instead of the power of God.

From Chapter 32 to Chapter 37 we learn something that Job nor his comforters knew:

- i. that the suffering of the righteous is not a token of God's wrath but instead a token of His love,
- ii. it is not a punishment of their sins but a refinement of their righteousness. His three friends had been wrong –
- iii. suffering is not the proof of wickedness. Job had been wrong –
- iv. God doesn't let people suffer on an arbitrary basis.
- v. God had not become his enemy just because bad things had happened to him

Job repents and submits himself to God, and everything is restored to him two fold, after that he prayed for his friends. But what if he hadn't restored all to Job?

Job suffered greatly. He mourned and grieved and complained. He had a wrong idea of suffering. He was righteous in his own eyes. But in all these things the Bible says he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

It is obviously not wrong to feel bad when bad things happen to you. It is wrong to curse God for them.

Job was a great overcomer, but was he an overcomer because everything was restored to him? No. The restoration of his riches and even his children were gifts from God.

IN THE SAME WAY THAT HIS SUFFERING WAS NOT A SIGN OF HIS WICKEDNESS, THEN THE BLESSINGS HE HAD WERE NOT A SIGN OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

What does all this have to do with our opening scripture about the 24 elders worshipping God in heaven.

Look at the original accusation the evil made about Job:

Job 1:9-10 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? (10) Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Satan said that Job only worshipped God because of the blessings God gave him, so God took those blessings away. Job still worshipped God when everything, absolutely everything, in his life went wrong.

The 24 elders that worship God in heaven. Do you think they worship God because they got everything they wanted? Do you think they worship Him because they never had any sickness that wasn't healed, they never had pain or discouragement or disappointment, they never were scared, or lonely, or broke. God always told them what He was doing and where they were going, and He told them beforehand every thing they must suffer – or did they, like us, have to go through bad things that we don't deserve and we don't know why.

Job suffered things he didn't deserve, and yet he still worshipped God. Read the book of Job and you would find that God didn't tell Job the reason for his suffering.

If the only people who worship God are the ones who get everything they want without any suffering, then the devil can raise the same accusation against them that he raised against Job – they only worship for what they get.

BUT the ones who suffer, the ones who go through trials, troubles, persecution, pain, upset, fear AND DON'T KNOW WHY – they are the ones who can stand in heaven and say "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

He is the only one worthy of worship, the only ones truly worthy of worshipping Him are those who have come out of great tribulation, and yet CHOOSE by FAITH to continue loving and serving Him.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (4) But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

And are able to stand and worship Him, worthy of the honour.

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