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The Origin of Worship

The origin of worship is heaven. It began when God created the angels and all their ranks. However, we don't discover this in Genesis 1, at the creation of the world; we discover it in Revelation 4 when John was transported into the heavens and given a worship experience that will change his hunger for the presence of God, and whet our own appetite for that heavenly worship.

Worship began with God wanting it in the heavens. He created the angels to worship Him, and the sound dimension was birthed with a heavenly sound from the angels responding to the presence and works of God. While God provides us with a picture of worship in Genesis 1, where He records how the earth was created, with all the facets and details, the heavens remain a mystery to us. This mystery doesn't unfold until we read Revelation 4. We will be looking at these scriptures in more depth throughout the book.

Though the origin of worship is in heaven, it was perfected on earth. The sound dimension of worship, the singing of a chorus, the responding back and forth from the angels all began in heaven. However, the full expression of that worship could be put into an extensive vocabulary and posture when God created man in His image and

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likeness. We will be exploring this further in the upcoming chapters, but for now I want to whet your appetite for worship.

The word for worship in Hebrew is *sagad*, meaning to prostrate, bow down, or posture. The Greek word for worship is *proskuneo*, meaning to bend or to lay flat before Him. Notice that both words denote posture.

God wants you to bring your posture, your expression, into worship. The Hebrew word implies that worship is about intimacy—about your intimate relationship with God, which is one of the aspects I love about worship. Intimacy draws you to God. It suggests that you must abandon who you are, what you think, and how you think it. Intimacy implies closeness or familiarity. When you come before God and there is an exchange of secrets and mysteries, you want God's thoughts, not your thoughts. And thus it becomes a wonderful relationship that begins with the heart of a worshipper knowing God.

There are innumerable aspects of worship in its original state. We see it in its original creativity in the heavens. However, we only learn about worship in the heavens through John after his relationship with Jesus. John was sent in exile to the Isle of Patmos, and in a place of despair, he encountered God in a very real way. No man had this full experience with the vocabulary to explain heaven's worship service as John did; only the Holy Spirit could provide the words through him.

Jesus opened the door or became the entrance for John to go into heaven to witness this worship experience or revelation. John represented a different generation who would speak to a generation to come who would be able to understand and respond with worship and knowledge far beyond John's day—a different vocabulary, imagination, technology, and understanding.

In Revelation 4:1–11 he recorded:

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither and I will shew

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thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven and one sat on the throne, and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou has created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

When you read those verses, you get a revelation, an understanding, an unveiling of what worship is like in the heavens, and what it's been like from the foundation of the earth until now. The creation is surrounding the throne, singing, "Holy, holy, holy," and they are still witnessing things they simply cannot express.

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Everything in heaven is continually responding. The four beasts have their own form of expression; the elders remove their crowns and throw them before the Lord. As with the elders, whatever position, whatever authority, whatever role I play, when I stand in worship, I abandon who I am and what I'm about because I'm caught up in the moment with God.

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Yes, the origin of worship was in the heavens, and we are given this picture of everyone working in harmony, everyone knowing his or her role, knowing the part he or she plays. But it's also interesting to note that each one had a specific response. The angels surrounding the throne, the four beasts with outstretched wings—the only vocabulary they have is “Holy, holy, holy,” which had been said long before God said, “Let there be light,” and separated the heavens from the earth (Gen. 1).