

## THE LION-LAMB'S HONOR - REV. 5:12 #5

The baseball playoffs are in full swing. Some teams like our Tigers were not given much of a chance of making the playoffs at the beginning of the season. But they surprised all the experts with their terrific season. Other teams like the Yankees and Cardinals were predicted to win their divisions. As I was watching the pre-game show of one of the Cardinal games the other day, the cameras panned some of the features of Busch Stadium in St. Louis and landed on a statue of Stan Musial. I couldn't help but remember a humorous anecdote of that statue's dedication. Stan Musial, of course, is remembered as one of the finest baseball players who ever played the game. Stan the Man, as he was usually called, played in the outfield or at first base for the St. Louis Cardinals. He won 7 National League batting titles in 22 years of playing ball, and had a lifetime batting average of .331. Nobody was surprised when he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in the first year that he was eligible. Nor was anyone surprised when the St. Louis baseball franchise unveiled its plans to erect a large statue honoring him outside of the stadium.

When the day came to dedicate Musial's statue, all of the club dignitaries were there. Red Schoendienst, the Cardinal manager, who also had been Musial's roommate during his playing days, was asked to give the keynote address. Schoendienst took everyone by surprise when he rose to the podium, looked over at the beaming Musial, and said, *Stan, in your 20 years as a player for the St. Louis Cardinals you've done a lot for them, and for all of baseball. And now you're going to give the pigeons a break.*

The manager's humorous comment really sums up the fleeting nature of human honor. One day, a celebrity is the talk of the town; the next day, few can even remember his name. One day, he is king of the roost; the next day, he is a roost for pigeons.

There is only one being who has had honor that remains undiminished not only throughout years and decades, but also throughout centuries and even millennia. And this being will continue to receive honor throughout all eternity. For He alone is ultimately worthy of all honor.

It's no wonder that the angelic choir included *honor* as one of the stanzas of its great song of praise recorded in Revelation 5:11,12:

*<sup>11</sup> Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. <sup>12</sup> In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"*

We have been looking at the 7 characteristics of the Lion-Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, that are found in this great song of praise.

\*We began by looking at his **power** or authority illustrated by the fact that He was the only one who had the ability to take the scroll from the hand of God the Father, executing all of the divine plan for blessing and judgment in the future.

*5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."*

\*We then saw His **wealth** illustrated by the song of the 24 elders who laid their crowns at His feet acknowledging His position as the creator and sustainer of all things.

*Revelation 4:10-11 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

\*We then went further to see His **wisdom** illustrated by the 7 eyes in the vision that have the ability to see and know everything that is going on throughout the entire earth.

*Revelation 5:6*

*<sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

\*Last week we saw His **strength** illustrated by the flashes of lightning and roaring thunder that proceeds right out of the very throne of God.

*\* From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.*  
(Rev. 4:5)

\*Now this week we want to look at the **honor** of the Lion-Lamb. He is worthy to receive honor according to the song of the angels.

\*the word which is translated *honor* is a very interesting one in the original language. It has a 2-fold meaning - one abstract and another which couldn't be

more concrete.

\*The abstract meaning of honor is deference or reverence given to a being who has some high rank or state of office. We use honor in the same way today. In fact, when we are in court room, we call the judge *your honor*. In doing this we are recognizing the position or office that the judge has and showing respect for it.

God has the highest rank of anyone in the whole universe. God is the only being that has existed throughout eternity past. God is the originator of all things that presently exist. God is the one who keeps the universe running smoothly, and that despite the many blunders and errors of his creators who keep doing so much to pollute and destroy it. God deserves respect and reverence for the position that He holds as the only infinite being.

\*But the original term honor also had a very concrete meaning. This term (tim may) was used to describe the price that something cost. Everything has an inherent value - what it is worth. A gallon of gas is worth over 2 dollars. But a car is worth 20,000 or so dollars. And cars differ in their value according to their make and model and features. The price that one pays for a car or the gas that he puts into the car or anything else of value could be called a tim may. We get the term *honorarium* from this part of the word's meaning. An honorarium is the price that is paid to a speaker for a speech that he gives. And honoraria differ according to the value or demand of the speaker. A Chinese real estate development company paid former President Bill Clinton \$200,000 for a 30 minute speech. Obviously they were paying for the honor of having a former President of the United States give a speech for their organization – it certainly couldn't have been

for the content of the speech.

Now God deserves honor not only because of the position that He has, but also because of the inherent value or preciousness of his being. When you get right down to it, God is the only indispensable being in the entire Universe. Any one of us could cease to exist and the world would go on. Yes, there would be loved ones and friends who would grieve, but even they would go on with their lives. There is no single being on this planet that is indispensable to the world's existence. World leaders, business tycoons, athletic superstars could all die - and life would go on.

But there is one being whose death would affect everything immediately. That being is God. If God were to die, everything else would immediately cease to exist as well. God is not only the being who created all things, but He is also the one who sustains all things or keeps them going. The Bible says that all things are held together by Christ's powerful word. Now, thankfully, God cannot die. God cannot die because God is life. He has self-existent life or life within himself as Jesus put it. But God deserves honor not only because of the position that He holds, but also because of how valuable He actually is. It's no wonder that the angelic choir included honor in its song of praise to God. And God will continue to receive the honor that He deserves throughout all eternity.

\*Now realizing that God is worthy of our honor because of who He is and how valuable He is to His creation, how can we give honor to the Lion-Lamb in the practical living of our lives today? We don't have time to fully answer this question, but I want to spend the remaining minutes that we have looking at 2 very

distinct and practical ways that we can honor God according to the Scriptures. The Bible invites us to honor God both with our mouths and with our bodies.

1. We honor God when we show respect to both His name and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with our mouths -

Now this is an area that I fear is being quickly lost in our culture today. We hear a great deal about the 10 commandments, but how often we forget that one of those very commandments was a requirement to treat the name of God with respect when we speak it.

*Ex. 20:7: 7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*

Now this commandment means simply that every time the name God or Lord or Jesus Christ comes from our lips, it should come forth with honor and respect. We should never utter God's name carelessly let alone in contempt. God's name should never be uttered frivolously, without meaning. It certainly should never be uttered in response to something unfortunate or bad that has happened. To use God's name in a frivolous or contemptuous manner is to not honor God, to not give God the value or respect that He is due because of the position that He holds and His preciousness to His creation.

Now the Jewish people understood the seriousness of this command during the O.T. days. In fact, they had such a desire to honor the name of God that the Scribes who copied the Scriptures went far beyond what was required of them. When a Scribe was making a copy of the Bible in ancient times, whenever he came to the word *Jehovah*, he stopped, cleaned his pen, went himself to wash off,

and only then wrote God's name on the parchment. Scribes did this to honor the name of the Lord God.

Now I don't have to remind you how lightly our American culture uses the name of God for it is all too obvious in our daily life. None of us can go a day without hearing many people profane God's name. Many hear constant blasphemy at their place of work. Kids on the school ground hear the name of the Lord Jesus Christ used in profanity. We even hear the Lord's name taken in vain on a regular basis when we turn on our television sets. And we realize that we can't control everything in our culture around us.

But what is even more disturbing is the way that the world culture and the enemy's attempts to dishonor God have permeated into the lives of many professing Christians. I have heard many professing Christians take the Lord's name in vain. I have heard many professing Christians utter Christ's name in a flippant manner without meaning or respect. And I think that we are failing to realize how serious a matter this is in the eyes of God. This is one of the 10 commandments that God chose to give to his people. And in many other places in the Bible, God instructs us to honor his name.

*Isaiah 26:13 13 O LORD, our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone do we honor.*

2. We honor Him when we give to Him our bodies as a living sacrifice for His work here on this earth -

*Romans 12:1-2: <sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual*

*act of worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

The progressive nature of God dwelling with his people is fascinating to trace through his redemptive program. We have been studying the tabernacle during these past Wednesday evenings. The symbolism and typology found in the tabernacle is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. But the simple fact is that God's people had to go to the tabernacle and later the temple in order to be near the presence of God on this earth during the O.T. days for the essence of God's presence was found in the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant was. It certainly doesn't surprise us that God's people treated the tabernacle and later the temple with utmost respect for in doing so, they were honoring God. When the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant or the temple was looted by the Babylonians, the Israelites grieved for their God was being dishonored. Then God sent his one and only Son to this earth and the fullness of the Godhead was present within him. So people followed him around and came from great distances to hear the words of grace that poured forth from his lips. And we can understand the deep grief and sorrow that Christ's disciples felt when the Lord Jesus Christ was arrested and crucified for their God was being dishonored. Now we must realize the implications of that glorious day of Pentecost when God the Holy Spirit came

to indwell each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since that day of Pentecost, God has been personally indwelling each and every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the very important ways that we honor God is by recognizing this truth and using these earthly bodies as living sacrifices in service for God.

\*God is honored when his children use their gifts and abilities that have been loaned to them to promote His glory and build His kingdom.

\*When God's child sacrifices her evening to prepare a Sunday School lesson to teach His truths to some children, God is honored.

\*When God's child walks over to that fence in his backyard to share the goodness of God in his life with his neighbor so that his neighbor might also know a personal relationship with the Lord, God is honored.

\*When God's child lives a consistent life at his work being a faithful and dedicated employee, God is honored.

\*When God's child doesn't follow the rest of the crowd but stands up for what is right at school, God is honored.

\*When God's child gets on that treadmill and logs in those several miles so that her heart and lungs are strengthened, God is honored.

\*In short, God is honored when his children offer their bodies to him as living sacrifices honoring God with their bodies.

As we all know, the Apostle John wrote 5 books which are included in the N.T. 3 are brief epistles that we call first, second and third John. The other two are longer books – a gospel account of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and this

final apocalyptic book of the N.T. that we have been studying together during these past Sunday mornings. One of the close friends and disciples of the Apostle John was a man named Polycarp. Polycarp is not mentioned in the Bible, but we do know quite a bit about him from early extra-biblical sources. In fact, Polycarp wrote a letter to the church at Philippi that we have today. Tradition tells us that the Apostle John lead Polycarp to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and then discipled him, teaching this young believer God's truth. Polycarp in his adult life became the pastor of the church at Smyrna, one of the churches that John wrote about in Revelations 2 and 3 - in fact, the church at Smyrna had one of the most positive messages from John as he praised them for their willingness to suffer affliction and persecution. Today, Polycarp is not primarily remembered for the pastorate that he served, but he is rather remembered for the martyrdom he suffered.

Polycarp was arrested during the 4th great persecution of the early church under the rule of Marcus Aurelius. When he was given an opportunity to recant his faith, he simply asked how he could deny the one who had died for him? Polycarp was then tied to a stake and burned to death. But all the while he was being burned at the stake, Polycarp continued to sing praises to the Lord and give testimony of His goodness. And the result was that several of the eyewitnesses of his martyrdom came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ right on the spot of his execution. Imagine that! The Roman soldiers are executing one of the early Christian leaders in their attempt to stamp out the Christian faith and by the time they are done with their godless deed, there are 3 more new Christians professing faith openly at the sight of the martyrdom – their efforts have tripled the growth of

Christianity. Polycarp was not only a living sacrifice for the Lord, honoring Him with his life, but he also honored Christ with his death as well.

Now it appears to be unlikely that we will be asked to give our lives in death as martyrs for the Lord. I say it appears because none of us knows what lies ahead in the future. And as we see how far away from God's principles our culture is getting, nothing can really be ruled out. I never would have guessed in my youth that it would one day be legal to kill babies in the womb - yet it happened and close to 50 million innocent babies have legally been put to death since 1973 (that's one-sixth the number of people who live in our entire country today). If the influence of radical Islam is not thwarted and it continues to expand as it has in the past decade, it would be naïve of us to think that we would not suffer persecution as Christians when Christians who are living in countries dominated by Islamic thought are suffering severe persecution right now. So I have come far from thinking that martyrdom for one's faith is out of the question in our country. We don't know what lies ahead.

But we do know that just as valuable as the martyr's blood is the living sacrifice that God asks from each of his followers. Whether we live in a free country or one where all movements are carefully monitored and restricted, God calls on each and every one of his children to be a living sacrifice for his glory. We need to realize that as we serve the Lord, we are honoring God with our bodies. And God is worthy of all the honor that we are capable of giving Him.

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor . . .*