

Ten Days of Praise
Ascension to Pentecost
May 18 – May 27, 2023



Ten Days of Praise is written by Steve Hawthorne
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Ten Days of Praise Ascension to Pentecost May 18 - May 27, 2023

The first united prayer season of the church got underway on the day that Jesus ascended to heaven. They prayed constantly in the upper room until Pentecost morning. During these ten days, we invite you to join with people from many different countries in giving praise to our magnificent Lord. The following day is Pentecost – a day Christians celebrate the continuing work and presence of our risen Lord by the Spirit of God.

Christ Ascends to Heaven

The gospel announces not only the death and resurrection of Jesus, but also His exaltation. We tend to emphasize the death and resurrection because they deal with our fear of death and our guilt concerning sin.

We know very well that the gospel declares His exaltation and coming. The Apostle's Creed covers it clearly: "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead." But our liturgies leave out the ascension. We rhythmically recite: "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." Christ's ascension to heaven means that He is more present than if He had remained on earth.

Consider this: What if Jesus had remained on the earth after the resurrection? He could have gone on tours and done amazing miracles before massive crowds. But God always had in mind something far better than one miracle man. God has planned from ages ago to exalt a man with every and all authority, and by that man, to empower and collaborate with men, women and children all over the earth.

It Really Happened!

Near the hilltop village of Bethany, the risen Lord spoke to His followers about the Father's promise to bestow His Spirit, empowering them for global witness. After saying this, He began to speak blessing upon them, lifting His hands as He often would when saying farewell. As He was speaking this blessing, His feet left the ground, and He was somehow lifted up into the sky. Then He kept going upward.

Lifted into the Sky

These men had seen a lot recently. But this was different. They gawked and pointed. A cloud formed, enveloping Him as if it were taking Him in. And then He was gone. If you had been there, you would have done what they did: they continued to gaze intently.

They were shocked to hear a voice. A man was there. No. Two men. One simply asked a question with an obvious answer, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky?" And then, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Expectant Worship

There was awe. Heaven had never been so close. And vast. And known to them. Luke's account says that they worshiped Jesus, right then and there. They all found themselves kneeling, bowing. They eventually gathered themselves, feeling exuberant with a limitless joy.

They decided to go back to Jerusalem. He had told them to expect the promise of the Father to be fulfilled. And it would be soon. "Not many days," He had said. And so they prayed almost night and day in the temple and in an upper room.

Recognizing Jesus as the Ascended King

The first followers of Jesus watched Him being lifted into the heavens. They had walked and worked with Jesus, knowing Him as a man from Galilee. But now, they had not only seen Him alive from the dead; they had seen Him ascend to the heavens.

Their joy increased as they realized that God was fulfilling ancient prophecies that a human would be exalted as King over all things. They began to understand: Jesus was this global King! Their praise was spontaneous, but kept going for days.

*He led them out as far as Bethany,
and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.
While He was blessing them,
He parted from them
and was carried up into heaven.
And they, after worshiping Him,
returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
and were continually in the temple praising God. – Luke 24:50-53*

Praise Him as Exalted Lord

You, our risen Lord, were not just raised from death, You were raised from the earth to heaven. You were given far more than a place in paradise. You have been enthroned, endowed with all authority in heaven and earth. We rejoice to name and praise You as the only God-appointed King of all heaven and earth. Jesus, our Messiah, You are Lord.

Welcome His Life-Giving Presence

We cannot see You, but You are not absent. Because You are enthroned, You are more abundantly present by the Spirit of God. You are leading us and speaking to us in marvelous ways. We gratefully give You our attention and allegiance.

Receiving His Blessing, Responding with Praise

You intended for us to remember our last sight of You on earth: You were extending Your hands toward us while speaking words of blessing. Your blessing extends to every one of Your followers, even to the present hour. We receive Your blessing, the power and fruitfulness of Your resurrected life. With joy we worship You, blessing You with our praise.

Seeing the Enthronement of Jesus in Psalm 110

Peter quoted Psalm 110 on Pentecost (Acts 2:34-35). It is likely that the 120 disciples in the upper room lifted their praises and prayers from this scripture. This psalm portrays the Almighty God making three astounding decrees to a king who reigns enthroned alongside Him. Who is this person who governs all things with God? How could it be possible for a human to be so exalted? It may have been a mystery even to David, as he wrote the psalm.

Each of these decrees describes a different relationship: first, as co-enthroned with God; second, ruling over His enemies; and third, leading His people in worship as a priest. In the face of enmity, this priestly leader forms a worshiping people who, without coercion, offer themselves to God as a lavish free-will offering amidst great opposition.

The LORD says to my Lord:

“Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying,

“Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power.

In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,

Your youth are to You as the dew.

The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,

“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” – Psalm 110:1-4

Exalt Him as Ascendant King

“Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” – Psalm 110:1

The Everlasting God has granted You, His chosen messianic King, all authority to subdue and overcome Your enemies. Your victory is unfolding over a lengthy time frame – “the day of Your power” (Psalm 110:3)..

Praise Him as Overcoming Lord

“Rule in the midst of Your enemies.” – Psalm 110:2

You could have vanquished Your enemies in an instant. But instead, Your glory is even greater by ruling Your people in the midst of vicious opposition and hatred.

Follow Him as the Only Global Priest

“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” – Psalm 110:4

You are God’s chosen priest for all peoples. With Your help as our great priest, we gladly offer ourselves together as a free-will worship offering. You have endowed us with the holy beauty of God. We give ourselves wholly – body, mind and soul – so that the living God will be delighted in our love.

God Entrusts Kingly Authority to a Human

In a vision, the prophet Daniel saw a human (“son of man”) approaching the heavenly throne of God. This human figure was presented in a ceremony of high, royal protocol before God, “the Ancient of Days” (Daniel 7:13). God Himself entrusted this Son of Man with kingly authority and dominion to enact the fullness of His purpose: that many from all peoples, nations and languages would submit themselves and serve this Son of Man as their King.

The resurrected Christ told His followers, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” It should be no surprise that He called for the discipling of all peoples, resulting in some from every people and tribe serving Christ gladly in the obedience of faith (Matthew 28:18-20).

We recognize Jesus as fully, and eternally God, but He also took on full humanity. Christ’s exaltation does not mean that a man became God; rather, the living God had, in Jesus, taken on full humanity.

*I kept looking in the night visions, and behold,
with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming,
and He came up to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before Him.
And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom,
that all the peoples, nations and people of every language
might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away.
And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. – Daniel 7:13-14*

Celebrate Him as King of Nations Forever

Risen Lord, the Ancient of Days has exalted You, placing history in Your hands. You will never be surpassed. You will never be surprised by rival powers. There is no limit to Your Lordship. Your jurisdiction encompasses every people and place of the entire earth. We rejoice in Your Lordship.

Pray for Him to be Served in Every People

You have entrusted Your people to collaborate with You “all the days until the end of the age” in order to “discipline” many in every people and place (Matthew 28:19-20). You will not fail to draw to Yourself some from every people so that they serve You in loving obedience. We ask You, Lord of the harvest, for a greater sending of Your people, that we may soon hear the global song, glorifying Your name across the face of the earth.

His Costly Sacrifice Makes Him Worthy to Be Served

The apostle John was shown what prophets had long foretold: that a human would be exalted to the throne of God. This man would be entrusted with authority to accomplish the fullness of God's purpose amidst all the peoples of earth and over every power of heaven.

John's gaze, like every one of the angels and elders, was fixed on the wonder of the Living God. In His right hand was a sealed scroll. The entirety of God's purpose was inscribed within that scroll, which could only be opened by someone able and worthy to enact His will. The question was asked, "Who is worthy to open the scroll?" There was no answer. John began to weep, grieved to imagine that the vast beauty of God's will would never happen. "Stop weeping," he was told. There is One who is worthy. "Behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the scroll" (Revelation 5:2-5).

And then John saw a human being, somehow in the form of a sacrificial Lamb, approaching the throne to receive the scroll. At that moment, angels and elders near the throne burst into "a new song," exalting the Lamb:

*Worthy are You...for You were slain,
and purchased for God with Your blood
people 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. – Revelation 5:9-10*

And then, many myriads of angels joined the song at full volume, celebrating the glory that would surely come to Him from all the diverse peoples and cultures:

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches
and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. – Revelation 5:12*

Sing of His Singular Worthiness

You alone are worthy to carry out the will of God on earth. You shed Your blood to purchase men, women and children from every language and lineage. Your death has bought us. Your life now empowers us to become treasured worship-servants to our God.

Anticipate the Worship of All Nations

A priestly people will mature and come forth in every people, gladly offering themselves to You. We long to see the day when across the face of the earth, the nations will lavish their love upon You with every kind of story, song and art.

Overcoming the Sin of the World

John beholds Jesus as “a Lamb standing, as if slain” (Revelation 5:6). In our day, this can seem odd. Why a lamb? Why was it killed? And how is this lamb alive again? The image alludes to a lamb sacrificed to atone for sin in Jewish temple ceremonies. But the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross did more than cover the sins of a few. Because Jesus “was slain,” angels exclaimed that He had “purchased for God with Your blood people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

We can join angelic hosts in gratefully praising our Lord for this costly forgiveness. He does not merely forgive, He empowers blood-washed sinners to forgive others who sin against them. By His life and power, forgiven sinners can become reconcilers.

He is doing far more than merely taking away some of our sins. The voice of John the Baptist still calls us to “Behold the Lamb of God, who is taking away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). The Lamb is ending the escalating juggernaut of evil, bringing about tremendous reconciliation among all the peoples of the earth.

*To Him who loves us
and released us from our sins by His blood
— and He has made us to be a kingdom,
priests to His God and Father —
to Him be the glory and the dominion forever. — Revelation 1:5-6*

Revel in the Love of the Lamb

*“Jesus Christ ... who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood...”
— Revelation 1:5*

To carry the burden of even one person’s sin demonstrates great love. But to bear the sins and shame of billions is an act of love greater than we can imagine. You have so greatly loved us! We are free in Your forgiveness to come near You in holy joy as honored worship-servants.

Empowering Your People to Be Reconcilers

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! — John 1:29

You do more than forgive our sins. You have enabled us to forgive those who sin against us. So You are not only forgiving our sins, You are breaking the ongoing power of sin. Mighty Lamb of God, take away the sin of the world! Reconcile the many peoples that You have purchased for God

We Are Already Home, but Still on the Journey

John was allowed to behold an immense, uncountable multitude “from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues.” John must have been utterly astonished by this vast expanse of people “standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9).

He was told that this great multitude consisted of people “who are coming out of the great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14). The language, “coming out” is exodus language. John would have immediately understood. In his day there was great expectation that God would lead His people in a later, greater exodus from all nations.

John was told that this great throng was already home, clothed in white and rejoicing. Because they had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” they had been brought “before the throne of God” to “serve Him day and night in His temple” (Revelation 7:14-15). But at the same time, this multitude was still on the journey through difficulties and suffering. The Lamb on the throne was also leading them as their Shepherd.

While on the journey God overshadows them with His presence, as a living tabernacle. There may be suffering. There will be weeping. But the Lamb who has endured death is the one who wipes “every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).

Rejoice in the Fullness of Your Family

*These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation,
and they have washed their robes
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

*For this reason, they are before the throne of God;
and they serve Him day and night in His temple... – Revelation 7:14-15*

Your blood has cleansed us so that we have been granted standing before the very throne of our God. Although we are still being gathered from the nations, we celebrate as a global family, knowing that You have purchased some from every tribe and language. Each one of the peoples is precious and treasured before You.

Praise the Lamb as Our Shepherd

*He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them...
for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their Shepherd,
and will guide them to springs of the water of life;
and God will wipe every tear from their eyes. – Revelation 7:15, 17*

Washed in Your blood, and known at Your throne, we have already been welcomed home. But we are still on the journey with You, the Lamb, as our Shepherd. You guard us as You guide us. We are opposed as we journey through hardships, but You deepen our love to be like Yours, stronger than death. There may be weeping, but You comfort us, wiping away every one of our tears.

Facing Fear by Loving Him More Than Life

The apostle John heard angelic voices declaring that ultimately, every “kingdom of the world” will become “the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15). The Lamb will conquer, but without conquest.

God’s people overcome with the Lamb, but they also suffer with the Lamb. They are not sinless, and so they experience satanic accusations. But the devil’s condemnations ultimately fail because of the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb. Christ’s people suffer publicly for their loyalty to Christ, openly testifying to the truth as if they were being tried in court. They are threatened with death, but because of great love for Jesus, they prevail.

Sing of His Full Salvation

Behold, a great multitude

*...from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues,
standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*

...and they cry out...

“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” – Revelation 7:9-10

We exult in hope for the coming day of Your power when our salvation will be complete. We cry out with the great multitude, “Salvation to our God!” (Revelation 7:10). We have been saved from dreadful evil, but better still, we have been saved to serve You in love.

Praise Him for Love Overcoming Fear of Death

*“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of His Christ have come,*

*for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down,
he who accuses them before our God day and night.*

*And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb
and because of the word of their testimony,*

and they did not love their life even to the death.” – Revelation 12:10-11

We name You as the Lamb who was slain. You willingly offered Yourself, Your love overcoming fear of death. You loved us, and You loved Your Father God, more than life itself. You are even now empowering Your people throughout the world to overcome as they serve You in the midst of cruel persecution. By Your love they will prevail.

The Wonderful Judgment of God Setting Things Right

The risen Lord, the Lamb who had been slain, was entrusted with authority to enact God's purpose in every place, time and people as the long-promised Messiah. But as prophesied, He would "rule in the midst of Your enemies," for a prolonged time that was called "the day of Your power" (Psalm 110:2-3). Along with His worshiping people, the enthroned Messiah would contend with evil powers, ultimately overcoming His enemies on a final day, "the day of His wrath" when "He will judge among the nations" (Psalm 110:5-6).

That final day will be a time of righteous wrath, when the ascended Messiah will overcome every evil power. At a time known only to God, there will come a cataclysmic judgment affecting every person. Unjust powers will find no escape from "Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come" (Revelation 6:16-17).

Because we have all experienced the erratic and vindictive anger of broken people, we understandably hesitate to embrace the hope of the marvelous wrath of God. Unlike the wretched vengeance of human fury, God's judgment is invariably just, altogether righteous, and even beautiful in the goodness He accomplishes. On the great day of His wrath, He will vanquish every evil thing and vindicate all that is good and praiseworthy, finally setting things right.

Rejoice in the Honor of Suffering with the Lamb

"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful." – Revelation 17:14

It is privilege to be with You in the coming day of Your struggle and victory. In these days of strife, it is difficult to be faithful, but You have strengthened our faith again and again. We are honored to be called and chosen to endure suffering with You for Your great glory.

Anticipate the Wondrous Judgment of God

I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous..." – Revelation 19:1-2

We entrust ourselves to You as our Savior and our Judge. Your judgment is true because You are truth itself. Your every thought and word is altogether righteous. We yearn for the day when You will move in overwhelming power against every evil, bringing forth goodness and beauty.

Culminating All Things: The Beauty of Christ's Bride

From the throne, John heard a voice calling every one of His servants, both small and great, to “give praise to our God!” (Revelation 19:5). In response, John heard “the voice of a great multitude,” sounding loud and large, like thunder and waterfalls, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!” (Revelation 19:6).

This is the celebration of God completing all things. The culmination is far greater than people merely getting into heaven. God's people – drawn from all peoples – is extravagantly honored as His bride. If these were not “the true words of God” (Revelation 19:9), we might doubt that there could ever be matrimony with the Son of God.

The bride is prepared, adorned with an unearthly beauty that is the work of Jesus. He has cleansed her, enacting His righteous deeds through her, so that she is dressed with bright, radiant glory. This mystery is great: Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:32). We celebrate now with expectant joy as we anticipate that great wedding.

Rejoice in the Love of the Lamb

*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
so that He might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
that He might present to Himself
the church in all her glory.* – Ephesians 5:25-27

With our deepest joy we lift our loudest praise to behold the passionate love of the Lamb for His bride. Your bride – the people of God, somehow drawn from all peoples – is now making herself ready. It is Your great love that cleanses her from sin and clothes her in garments of glory. What extravagant honor!

Receive the Invitation with Expectant Praise

*“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come
and His bride has made herself ready.”
It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean;
for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints...
“Blessed are those who are invited
to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” – Revelation 19:7-9*

Soon comes the wedding that will consummate all things. With all creation we rejoice and give You praise, Almighty God, because You have chosen to complete all things with matrimonial fullness. People from every tribe and language have already accepted Your invitation to the marriage celebration of the Lamb. Many more will come.

The Ancient and Ultimate Great Global Song

Angelic choirs in heaven see and celebrate Him first. They exclaim “Worthy is the Lamb!” (Revelation 5:12). He is worthy of the highest praise, because He has “purchased for God” with His blood “people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). The Lamb will not fail to call to Himself those blood-bought people from every language and ethnicity of humanity.

The Lamb will lead them, as if He were their Shepherd, bringing them home to God’s presence (Revelation 7:17). It will be something like a later and greater exodus. The first time God’s people sang together was on the other side of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-18). That’s why John describes the great global song as “the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Revelation 15:3). And they sang:

*Great and marvelous are Your works,
O Lord God, the Almighty!
Righteous and true are Your ways,
King of the nations!
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy.
For all the nations will come and worship before You,
for Your righteous acts have been revealed. – Revelation 15:3-4*

Rejoice in the Hope of All-Peoples Worship

Worthy Lamb of God, You are already gathering worshipers to Yourself from every people and language. They will honor You with the redeemed glories of their cultures. Even now we hear and sing that final song.

Praise Him for His Works and His Ways

As never before in history, make Yourself known in the story-telling praise of Your people. Be honored as You reveal the greatness of Your works. Be glorified, even among those who oppose You, because of the majestic beauty and goodness of Your ways.

Name Him as King of All Nations

We respect and pray for the governors and rulers of the countries of earth. But we honor You as God’s appointed King over all kingdoms. You rule as King, speaking truly, because You are the truth. You act with perfect justice because You are righteousness itself. May Your kingdom come!

The Fullness of God's Spirit for the Fulfillment of His Purpose

On Pentecost, Peter declared that Jesus had not only been raised from the dead, but that He had been enthroned with God in the heavens. The ascension of Jesus does not mean that He is absent. He is all the more present, fulfilling the Father's will, co-working with His people, who have been empowered by the promised gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Having prayed and praised with the Scriptures for days, they were speaking exuberantly about "the great deeds of God" (Acts 2:11). God's Spirit empowered them to speak so that people from other lands and languages could hear what was being said in their mother tongue. This was a sign of an even greater work of God to come: People in every place, tribe and tongue will hear the gospel.

Exalted to the Father. Present by the Spirit

*This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.
Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God,
and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,
He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. – Acts 2:32-33*

Risen Jesus, we honor You as King. Father Almighty, we receive the gift of Your Spirit. And Spirit of the Living God, we delight in the fullness of Your love and power. You, precious Spirit, renew and empower us to work alongside of our Lord Jesus. We love to glorify our Lord Jesus by our worship and our witness. We have been filled with the Spirit so that the earth will be filled with Your glory.

His Voice Will be Heard in Every Tribe and Tongue

*There were...devout people from every people under heaven...
Each one of them was hearing...in his own language. – Acts 2:5-6*

In that city on Pentecost morning, there were people from every major ethnicity under heaven. Each one was clearly hearing the gospel in their own language. We rejoice in hope that soon You will send Your people to make Your voice heard in every place and people on the face of the earth.

He Will Hear Himself Praised in Every Language

We hear them in our own languages speaking of the mighty deeds of God. – Acts 2:11

You are worthy to be praised with all the distinctive beauties of each of the diverse peoples. Sanctified by Your Son, the art and song of every culture will bring You glory. We rejoice in hope that You will hear Yourself praised by every tribe and in every tongue.