

Blessed Are Those: A Journey through Revelation – Part 5

The Throne above All - Rev. 4:1-11

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Feb. 2nd, 2025

Intro:

- As we read the messages to the churches in the previous chapters, the prayer was that we would have “ears to hear.” Today, in chapter four, our prayer is that God would give us “eyes that see” so we can behold and comprehend the eternal reality of the heavenly realm.
- Who can do justice to adequately describe all that we will see in this chapter and the next when Jesus enters the scene? Isaiah saw a similar vision (Isa. 6:1-5), as did Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:4-28) and Daniel (Dan. 7:9-14). Moses experienced some of this firsthand as he and then, together with the elders, met with God on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19, 24:9-16). Each one did not have the words to fully describe what they saw because they were overwhelmed and overcome by the vision and their experiences with God.
- I hope and have prayed that this vision of the throne room of God would capture and overwhelm your mind and heart and be deeply imprinted upon them as to what was, what it is, and what is to come, that this vision causes you to fall down in awe and worship to THE ONE who is on the throne.
- I have divided this chapter into two sections. First, we are to behold THE ONE seated on the throne, and I will read primarily from the ESV. Then, in the second section, we will respond with worship of THE ONE seated on the throne, and I will read primarily from the NIV.

Behold THE ONE seated on the throne

Rev 4:1-6a ESV

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. 3 And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and boomings of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, 6 and before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, sparkling like crystal.

- I hope this vision of God overwhelms you, and we are going to stop and look at various parts to better comprehend their meaning.
- *Behold, a door standing open in heaven* – Heaven is an ongoing reality that exists just beyond the door. It is not far from any of us (Acts 17:27). It is the reality that is above and beyond us

and, at the same time, intermeshed and connected to this reality. God is neither distant nor indifferent. He calls us to see and understand His sovereign reign and glory.

The “door of heaven” is opened to us by the One who has a voice like a trumpet and who walks between heaven and earth, between the two dimensions, who is the gate, and the truth, and the way, and the life (John 14:6). It is by His voice and through His invitation we enter into the Kingdom and the glory of Heaven. He knows what is; He knows what will take place. He is our Good Shepherd, our Trustworthy Guide, the great Promise Keeper and Way Maker, and we will dwell in His house forever.

- *Behold, a throne stood in heaven* – There is a seat of power, a central command. There is a center, a place everything emanates from, which means that life is not accidental, or random, or without meaning. This also means that there is purpose and intentionality in all things. This is the perspective we need in dealing with life that seems to us to be random, chaotic, and out of control at times. This is the perspective that we need in suffering, and hardships, and persecutions. This is the vision that we need: there is a throne in heaven around which everything is centered.

This throne is the most dominant image of the Book of Revelation. John refers to it forty-seven times directly and seventy-seven times indirectly. Don't miss it, and understand what it means: there is a sovereign, glorious God over all and at the center of it all.

- *Behold, THE ONE seated on the throne* – Not only is there a throne, but it is also occupied, not empty. THE ONE who is seated upon this throne is present and beyond comprehension. He is like none other. John tries to describe His appearance, and he says He looks like jasper and like carnelian. His appearance is not actually it, but He is like it.

Jasper is a beautiful gemstone that comes in all kinds of colors, from reds to blues to greens to yellows to oranges to purples, with blacks and whites, etc. Carnelian is another precious gemstone that has translucent shades of red. His appearance is majestic, and mysterious, and powerful, and intricate, multifaceted, multicolored, both concealing and revealing beauty and glory and majesty and awe and wonder.

- *Behold, around the throne, a rainbow* – The radiance of the glory of God is shown as a rainbow around the throne. The rainbow was a sign of God's covenant with His creation that the waters will never again destroy us (Gen. 9:13-17). A part of God's glory is that He remembers His covenants and keeps His promises, and they have no end (like a complete circle). This signifies that He is true to His word and can be trusted. In His justice, there is mercy, and His mercy is just, unendingly. He is a covenant-keeping God.
- *Behold, around the throne, twenty-four elders* – The leading theory is that these twenty-four elders represent the people of God. Twelve represent the twelve tribes before the coming of Jesus, and twelve represent the twelve apostles after the coming of Jesus, which combine to represent all of God's children.

The common bond of these elders is that they are clothed in white garments, which are garments of salvation and robes of righteousness that God gives to us to cover our nakedness (sinfulness) (Gen. 3:21, Isa 61:10). The golden crowns are crowns of life (Rev. 2:10), of

overcoming (Rev. 3:11), of glory (1 Peter 5:4), of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), and of holiness (Ex. 39:30). They are just like those the priests wore when they were ministering in the tabernacle, preparing to enter the “Holy of Holies” where God dwelt, which served as a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8:4-5).

- *Behold, from the throne, lightning and thunder* – This is a small demonstration of the power of God. He is the one who can command the elements. He is the one with all power. This is how God presented Himself on the top of Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19). Thunder and lightning and earthquakes, and hail come with the final judgment as seen in the seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments (Rev. 8:5, 11:19, 16:18-21). He is a God to be reckoned with; He is the God of all power, the Almighty.
- *Behold, before the throne, seven burning torches* – This symbolizes the Holy Spirit, who is perfect and who is everywhere. He is like fire, which can empower and devour, which can illuminate and cremate, which can warm and warn, which can mend and melt. Fire is powerful, beautiful, useful, and painful. God rained down fire on His enemies (Gen. 19:24, Num. 16:25) and poured out fire on His altar (Lev. 9:24, 1 Kings 18:38). He led and protected His people with fire in the wilderness (Ex. 13:22, 14:24). He spoke out of a fire to Moses (Ex. 3:2) and spoke through the 120 on the day of Pentecost as with “tongues of fire” (Acts 2:3). The Spirit of God is before the throne of God and He is a force to be reckoned with. By His light, we can see all things, and without Him, there is utter darkness.
- *Behold, before the throne, a sea like glass* – Some see this sea like glass as a symbol of God calming chaos and overcoming evil, which it may be. However, if the earthy tabernacle is a “copy and shadow” of the heavenly one (Heb. 8:5), the bronze basin with water for the temporary tent tabernacle (Ex. 30:18) is later replaced by a “sea” of water for the temple in Jerusalem (1 King 7:23-36). Its purpose was for the priests to “wash their hands and feet” (Ex. 30:19), and it was a representation of ongoing sanctification (the altar was for justification), the cleansing of sin. This concept is repeated in the Bible as the “sea of forgetfulness” as in Micah 7:19: “He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (see also Is. 1:18, Psalm 103:12, Jer. 31:34, Heb. 8:12). I think this “sea” signifies God’s forgiveness and reflects and amplifies His glory.
- This whole vision or scene is breathtaking and overwhelming with the grandeur, and greatness, and glory of God. It should captivate us, and capture us, and cause us to fall on our knees in worship. This is exactly what it does to those who are there, which brings us to our next point.

Worship THE ONE seated on the throne

Rev 4:6b-11 NIV

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings.

Day and night they never stop saying:

**“Holy, holy, holy is
the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”**

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 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.”**

- *The four living creatures* – Four is the number that represents creation. There are four rivers of Eden (Gen. 2:10), the four corners of the heavens and the earth (Is. 11:12, Jer. 41:36, Rev. 7:1, 20:8), and the four winds of heaven and earth (Jer. 49:36, Dan. 7:2, Matt. 24:31, Mark 13:27). These four creatures are living, and represent all the creatures that God has created. In Ezekiel’s visions (Ez. 1:4-28, 10:1-22), there were four living creatures, and each had four faces and four wings. They had the same four faces, and they were connected to wheels with eyes all around. It has been said that the four faces represent the mightiest among wild animals (the lion), the mightiest of the domesticated animals (the ox), the mightiest among the birds (the eagle), and the mightiest of all, man. They have eyes all around, meaning that they are everywhere and see from everywhere.
- *The essence of worship* – In God’s presence, when they see Him, they never stop worshiping. Worship of God does not start and end when we start and end. We are joining worship that has been going on since the creation of the world and will go on forever.
 - What worship consists of is a recognition of who God is. He is “Holy, Holy, Holy” three times, meaning He is perfectly perfect, set apart, and completely pure, with no shadow or flaw.
 - He is the Lord, THE ONE who is in charge by virtue of possession, the owner of all. He is God – the transcendent being who is above and beyond all beings. He is the Almighty, all-powerful, omnipotent, having unlimited authority and influence.
 - He was, and He is, and He is to come. He is eternal. He is immense. He is supreme. He is sovereign. He is infinite. He is intimate. He is the source of everything and everyone. He always was and always will be. It is right for us to worship Him.
 - What worship is, is giving glory (which is recognizing His magnificence, greatness, and splendor), and honor (which is recognizing His value, worth, and position), and thanks (which is recognizing all that He has done and all that He has given and all that we have in Him). Worship is not the invention of saying nice things about God; it is a recognition of who God already is. Worship is not about us. At its core, it is about Him.
 - Worship is bending your knee, falling down, and going low in response to His majesty, who He is, and what He has done. It is laying all that you have down in service and in gratitude to Him, as we see the elders doing. This is worship.

- It is worth-ship. It is valuing Him and treasuring Him above all things. It is recognition that He is worthy to receive all the glory and all the honor and all the power. He is the one who lives forever and ever. He is the one who created all things by His will. He is the one who gives meaning and purpose to all things.
- **“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16-18)**
- He is the center and purpose of everything. He is worthy of our praise. Those who see Him the clearest, worship Him the fullest. If you want to be a worshiper, then ask God to show Himself to you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. The closer you get, the greater you worship.

Conclusion

- Behold THE ONE seated on the throne. Let this vision and this scene capture and captivate you. Remember this, return to this, until you see it clearly in your mind’s eye, and treasure it in your heart. It will give you the strength to overcome. It will draw you to Him and cause you to worship. Seeing Him changes everything, and only by Him can we truly see.
- Worship THE ONE seated on the throne. He is worthy of all glory, and honor, and thanks, and power. Gladly bend your knee and lay yourself before Him.
- Next week, we will continue this glorious vision as we focus on chapter five, where Jesus enters the scene as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the triumphant, the Lamb looking as if it has been slain.

Benediction

May you stand in awe of the One seated on the throne, whose glory sparkles like precious stones and whose mercy encircles us like a rainbow.

May the Holy Spirit open your eyes to heaven’s door, so that in all circumstances, you worship Him who was, and is, and is to come.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, carry you in peace, holiness, and steadfast hope, both now and forevermore. Amen.

Questions for Growth Groups

1. **An Open Door (Revelation 4:1)** - John sees a door standing open in heaven. What does this suggest about God’s accessibility and His desire for us to approach Him?
2. **The Throne in Heaven (4:2)** - How does knowing there is a central throne, God’s seat of authority, help bring perspective and hope when life feels chaotic or uncertain?
3. **God’s Majestic Appearance (4:3)** - John compares God’s appearance to dazzling gemstones and describes a rainbow encircling the throne. What do these images communicate about God’s glory and His covenant-keeping nature?
4. **The Twenty-Four Elders (4:4)** - These elders wear white garments and golden crowns. What do these symbols represent, and how does their meaning encourage you in your own walk with God?
5. **Unceasing Worship (4:6–8)** - The four living creatures worship God day and night, never stopping. What does their continuous praise reveal about the essence of true worship?

6. **Laying Down Crowns (4:10)** - The elders fall down before God and lay their crowns at His feet. What “crowns” (achievements, possessions, or even worries) might you need to surrender in your life as an act of worship?
7. **Living in Light of the Throne (4:11)** - How does having a vision of God’s holiness and sovereignty, knowing He created and sustains all things, shape your everyday decisions, attitudes, and worship? What are you going to pray and do to draw closer to Him?