

Session 3

JESUS AND THE THRONE

Revelation 4:I-II

Memory Verse

*Our Lord and God,
you are worthy to receive
glory and honor and power,
because you have created all things,
and by your will
they exist and were created.*

— REVELATION 4:II, CSB



Jesus and the Throne

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Almighty God, “who was, who is, and who is to come” (v. 8), is sovereign and seated on the throne.

CALL TO ACTION: Where do you need to trust that God is in control today? How can you move toward that?

Have you ever been to Walt Disney World? It’s magical, and a lot of hard work goes into making sure it stays that way. Walt Disney was a big believer in the power of theming, and how big of an impact this could have on a visitor’s experience. When he built Disneyland (before Walt Disney World), he made sure a large embankment surrounded the park so guests could be fully immersed in the magical world they found themselves in.

At Disney World, one of the ways they keep the “magic” alive is the “Utilidor,” a massive underground tunnel system. Instead of having employees (Disney calls them Cast Members) walk through areas of the park that don’t match their uniforms, the Utilidor allows them to discreetly get around underground and unseen. So, you don’t see a Jungle Cruise captain walking around in futuristic Tomorrowland. The park takes deliveries in the Utilidor, and trash is even transported there to for disposal. This is all to preserve the magical environment Disney is known for. A trip to the Utilidor would excite many Disney aficionados, but today, we’ll read about a much more meaningful peek behind a “curtain.”

In today’s reading in Revelation, John saw into the heavenly throne room and was reminded who is seated on the throne.



Have you ever had an idea about how something worked, then realized reality was different from your perception?

? When you think of heaven, what comes to mind? What do you feel?
What do you hear?

Session Summary

Remember, Revelation can be confusing. This is true even for scholars who have devoted their lives to biblical study. As we read through passages with wild descriptions of creatures and scenes we can't wrap our minds around, be okay with what you understand and with what you don't.

Our understanding of Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit, not from our own merit, and He gives us understanding little by little. Ask God to help you understand, grab a solid study Bible, and trust that you'll take away what you're meant to. God has something He wants to teach you for your good.

In our passage today, John was given a peek into the heavenly throne room. In the wonder and splendor of this space, he saw almighty God the Father seated on His glorious throne, a throne room filled with many-eyed creatures, and a host of elders who never stop worshipping their Creator.

1. An Open Door (Revelation 4:1-2)

? What first impressions do you get of the heavenly throne room?

In Revelation chapter 4, John received a glimpse into the throne room of heaven. The action in chapter four picks up right after the letters to the churches concluded in chapter 3.

John referenced “an open door” (v. 1). This was an invitation. John was invited into the heavenly throne room because God wanted to reveal something to him (remember, this is what the book of Revelation is all about: God revealing). John was told he would see “what must take place after this” (v. 1), which He'd been previously instructed (by Jesus) to write down (Revelation 1:19).



Read Isaiah 6:1-4. What further context does this give about the throne room of God?

What's not clear about these verses is how, exactly, John saw what he did. Was he literally taken into heaven for this viewing by the Spirit? Did he physically remain in Patmos while the Spirit showed him this glimpse? Either way, we can trust what John recorded for us here, because this vision came from the Lord.¹

How John arrived at this sight isn't important (though we may wonder). But what he saw is very important. John arrived in heaven and saw someone seated on a throne: God the Father. The theme of "thrones" will be an important one in Revelation. The word throne is used 14 times in this chapter alone.² A poignant reminder that no matter what is happening on earth, God is forever on His throne, sovereign and in control.



What does a throne indicate in a worldly setting? How much more is this true of God's throne?

2. The Throne Room (Revelation 4:3-8)



How might you describe this scene in your own words?

Our passage continues with John's description of what he saw in the throne room, and a lot was happening. Apocalyptic literature uses imagery to evoke emotion, and the imagery in the throne room is humbling and rather majestic.

God the Father was sitting on the throne. John described Him as having the "appearance of jasper and carnelian stone" (v. 3). Carnelian is a vibrant red color. Jasper is an opaque jewel.³ It will be later mentioned in Revelation to describe new Jerusalem:

The foundations of the city wall were adorned with every kind of jewel: the first foundation is jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

—Revelation 21:19-20

John also described “a rainbow that had the appearance of emerald” surrounding the throne (v. 3). Ezekiel used similar language to describe God’s throne:

The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the likeness of the LORD’s glory. When I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking. —Ezekiel 1:28

This description calls to mind God’s promise to never again destroy the earth via flood from Genesis 9:8-17. When Revelation does include judgment, the rainbow reminds us of God’s great mercy, even in judgement.

Around the throne are twenty-four other thrones with people on them. John described them as “elders dressed in white clothes, with white golden crowns on their heads” (v. 4). The crowns here being symbolic of victory (like a victor in an ancient athletic competition).

As with many things in the book of Revelation, scholars aren’t agreed on who might be on the thrones. In Israelite culture, elders were leaders and representatives of the people (Exodus 24:9-10). The possibility that these are angels seems unlikely. They could represent God’s people. If we consider the number of tribes in Israel (12), plus the number of the apostles Jesus chose in His ministry (12), we get to twenty-four, representing God’s complete people.



What does the description of the throne room indicate about God’s power and authority?

From the Lord's throne comes "flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder" (v. 5). These are visual and auditory reminders of God's great power. Ancient religions associated lightning and thunder with pagan (little g) gods, but Jewish readers would make the connection to God's glory revealed in Exodus⁴:

On the third day, when morning came, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud blast from a trumpet, so that all the people in the camp shuddered. —Exodus 19:16

Note the repetition of seven in verse 5: first, "seven fiery torches" then, "seven spirits of God" (v. 5). Remember, seven is the number of perfection (fullness and completeness) in the Bible.

John also saw "something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal" before the throne (v. 6), perhaps reminiscent of the "sea" from Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:23-24). Ezekiel saw something similar:

Over the heads of the living creatures the likeness of an expanse was spread out. It gleamed like awe-inspiring crystal . . . —Ezekiel 1:22

Next, John moved on to one of the odder presences in the throne room: creatures covered in eyes. The first resembled a lion, the second an ox, the third "had a face like a man" (v. 7), and the fourth a flying eagle. Each of these creatures "had six wings" and "were covered with eyes around and inside" (v. 8, they are watchful). Their description reminds us of the cherubim Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10.⁵ These creatures may represent creation and give the reminder that God rules over His creation from His throne.

And all day and all night, they never stop their worship:

*Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God, the Almighty,
who was, who is, and who is to come.
—Revelation 4:8b*



How does the continuous worship of God by these creatures remind us how we should interact with and respond to God daily?

3. Worship (Revelation 4:9-11)

? How would you describe this scene in your own words?

The main action in the throne room is worship. The heavenly throne room is filled with continuous praise. The creatures worship, as is right for creation to do so. The twenty-four elders worship, too.

Look how John characterized the creatures' worship: "Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one seated on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever," (v. 9). They give glory. They give honor. And they give thanks to God the Father, who is seated on the throne. He deserves all glory, honor, and thanks.

? Why is God worthy of all glory, honor, and praise? How can we reflect this reality daily?

And while this is happening, the elders are falling down (a sign of great honor) in their worship of our all-powerful creator⁶:

*Our Lord and God,
you are worthy to receive
glory and honor and power,
because you have created all things,
and by your will
they exist and were created.
—Revelation 4:11*

? What of value do you need to cast down before God today? How does the finished work of Jesus remind us of the surpassing value of the Lord over all earthly things?

Conclusion

We can make multiple observations from our text today. First, God is sovereign and on the throne, always and forever. This is as true today as it was when John originally wrote these words. In John's time, God's people were being actively and aggressively persecuted in ways most of us cannot imagine today (recall Emperor Domitian from week one). Even in that dark day, God was sovereign and firmly on His throne. What a comfort that must have been for John's original audience. Even as we face worrisome times today, we can take comfort in this, too. Nothing happening in our lives can change the resolute fact that God is sovereign and on the throne.

Second, it is good and right to worship our God and creator. This scene in Revelation 4 depicts this worship happening continuously ("Day and night they never stop, saying," v. 8). We may not be able to outwardly worship God nonstop like these figures in the heavenly throne room, but worship of our Creator should be a regular fixture in our lives. All of life is meant to reflect God's greatness revealed clearly in Christ.



How does remembering God's authority and power provide you comfort today?



How can we live as more worshipful people in every area of life?



How can you tell about God's greatness by sharing the gospel this week?

Memorize

*Our Lord and God,
you are worthy to receive
glory and honor and power,
because you have created all things,
and by your will
they exist and were created.*

- Revelation 4:11, CSB

References

¹A. Boyd Luter, “Revelation,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

²Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Victorious: In Christ You Are an Overcomer*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

³Luter.

⁴Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible*, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan Academic, 2024), 1290.

⁵Luter.

⁶Beetham and Erickson.