

Jesus and the Throne

September 27, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Revelation 4:1-11

Session Outline

1. An Open Door (Revelation 4:1-2)
2. The Throne Room (Revelation 4:3-8)
3. Worship (Revelation 4:9-11)

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?

Jesus and the Throne

Introduction

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?

Sovereign God

Chapter 4 asserts the sovereign authority of the Creator God. Surrounded by the adoring and powerful four creatures and twenty-four elders, the Lord God the Almighty is holy, sovereign, and worthy of all worship. For He has created all things, and all things exist because of His gracious, sovereign will. John's vision of God upon His throne is reminiscent of Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1, each of which is calculated to impress the reader with the God of might and glory.

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?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for creating us, and all things. Praise Him for giving us the beauty and wonder of creation, all of which points back to Him. Ask for help to remember that He is on the throne and sovereign over all the earth. Seek to make worship of Him a regular part of your daily life.

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 4:11*

Additional Resources

- *Revelation for You* by Tim Chester
- *Be Victorious* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Exalting Jesus in Revelation* by Daniel Akin



Historical Context of Revelation

Purpose

Much of the book of Revelation focuses on events at the end of the age (eschatology), more so than any other book in the Bible. But it also focuses on practical choices that believers and unbelievers must make in the course of their lives that have far-reaching consequences at the end.

Author

The traditional view holds that the author of Revelation is the apostle John, who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three letters of John. Evidences for this view include the following. (1) The writer referred to himself as “John” (1:4, 9; 22:8). (2) He had personal relationships with the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4, 11; 2–3). (3) His circumstances at the time of writing (1:9) matched those of John the apostle (who was placed in Asia Minor from about AD 70 to 100 by reliable historical sources from the second century AD). (4) The saturation of the book with Old Testament imagery and echoes implies a Jewish writer, like John, operating in overwhelmingly Gentile Asia Minor.

Setting

The initial audience that received the book of Revelation was a group of seven local churches in southwest Asia Minor (1:11; 2–3). Some of these congregations were experiencing persecution (2:9–10, 13), probably under the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96). Others had doctrinal and practical problems (2:6, 13–15, 20–23). Also behind these surface problems was the backdrop of unseen but powerful spiritual warfare (2:10, 14, 24; 3:9).

Special Features

The resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ revealed himself to the apostle John, who had been imprisoned “on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Christ’s twofold purpose was: (1) to “unveil” a spiritual diagnosis for seven of the churches in Asia Minor with which John was familiar (chaps. 2–3), and (2) to reveal to John a series of visions setting forth events and factors related to the end times (chaps. 4–22).

Extended Commentary

Revelation 4:1-11

4:1–2 The phrases after this and what must take place after this signal the beginning of the body of the book (4:1–22:5) spoken of in 1:19, in the wording, “what will take place after this.” Even though John was told to come up here, it is not clear whether: (1) he was actually taken up into heaven (with the same command in 11:12 the two witnesses were taken to heaven), or (2) he was still “in the Spirit” (see note at 1:10) on the isle of Patmos (1:9–10). What he saw of the heavenly throne room in chaps. 4–5 is trustworthy either way, since the vision came from the Lord.

4:3–4 Jasper is an opaque jewel also mentioned in the description of the new Jerusalem (21:11, 19). Carnelian stone is a vivid red color. A rainbow is God’s covenant sign that he will never again judge the earth by destroying every creature in a flood (Gn 9:8–17). The Apocalypse tells of God’s just judgment of the world by other means. The twenty-four elders could refer to angels, but since there were elders as leaders in both Israel (Nm 11:16) and the church (Ti 1:5), it is more likely that twelve of the twenty-four represent the tribes of Israel and the other twelve the apostles of Christ, previewing the reference to the twelve tribes and twelve apostles in the new Jerusalem (21:12, 14). Elsewhere in Revelation, white clothes and golden crowns make up the attire of victorious believers (3:5; 6:11; 7:9; 19:8, 14).

4:5 Flashes of lightning ... and thunder coming from God (the throne) represent the first mention in Revelation of phenomena that intensify and spill over from heaven to earth as part of God’s just judgment (8:5; 11:19; 16:18, 21). On the seven spirits of God, see note at 1:4.

4:6–7 The four living creatures resemble the cherubim in Ezk 1 and 10, though there are differences as well. Covered with eyes means that very few things escape the notice of these watchful angelic creatures. The imagery of the lion ... ox ... man ... and eagle has strong linkage to Ezk 1:5–10 and may represent animate creation.

4:8 The mention of the creatures having six wings and the words holy, holy, holy echo the description of the seraphim in the heavenly throne room in Is 6:1–3. On who was, who is, and who is to come, see note at 1:4.

4:9–10 The heavenly throne room is characterized by unceasing joyful praise, thanksgiving, and worship toward the Lord by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders.

4:11 The beginning point of worship is to recognize that God is completely worthy to be recognized for his unrivaled glory and honor and power, and his work as Creator and Sustainer of all things.⁷

References

1. A. Boyd Luter, "Revelation," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
2. Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Victorious: In Christ You Are an Overcomer*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.
3. Luter.
4. Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible*, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan Academic, 2024), 1290.
5. Luter.
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7. Luter.