

THE VISION OF THE WORSHIP IN HEAVEN 4:7-11

Well let's turn in our Bibles, please, to Revelation chapter 4. Now I'm going to read together the entire chapter, though we're going to be looking at the second half today. Our study will be in verses 7 to 11, but in order to pick up the context of verses 7 to 11, it's important that we read the first six verses also. So let's read together, then, Revelation chapter 4, beginning at verse 1:

“¹ After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. ² And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ³ And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardis stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. ⁴ And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. ⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶ And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. ⁷ And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. ⁹ And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

As we have studied the book of Revelation together, we saw in chapter 1 a glorious vision of the resurrected Christ in all of His exalted majesty and power and glory. We then saw in chapters 2 and 3 that the focus of Christ was on His churches, and how they are doing in carrying out their spiritual warfare, as they carry out the great commission that He has given to them: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Now in chapters 4 and 5, we have opened to us a vision of heaven, and the role that it plays in the spiritual warfare that the churches on earth are engaging in. Here in chapters 4 and 5, we see that this battle to expand the Kingdom of God is not merely an earthly battle that we fight alone. From His throne, God controls everything that occurs, both in the physical and in the spiritual realms. All things on earth are governed by God in heaven, and because of that, we can be confident that God is managing all of our tribulations for our good and for His glory and for the defeat of His enemies and for the expansion of His kingdom. In the midst of all of our trials, we need to keep our focus on the throne.

Last week we began to meditate on this description of the throne in heaven, upon which God the Father is seated. We saw that God's throne is the center of the spiritual universe. We saw that as John looked upon the throne, he saw the glory of God was like a jasper stone, which represented God's purity and holiness. It was like a sardis stone, which represented His avenging justice. And it was like a rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald, which represented His lifegiving salvation. So we saw that God upon the throne was a God of purity, He was a God of avenging justice, and He was a God of saving mercy, who gives eternal life to His people.

Around this throne, there were twentyfour elders, who represent all of God's elect of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The seven lamps of fire represented the Holy Spirit. The seven lamps of fire before the throne, and the thunder and the lightning and the voices from before the throne manifest the fearfulness of His judgment towards those who would defy His authority and who would break His laws. The sea of glass represented the peacefulness and the purity that surrounds the throne of God, and the four living beings around the throne, we saw, were angels.

So with that very brief review of our sermon last week, we saw the description of God on His throne in verses 1 to 6. This week we want to consider together the worship of God on His throne, in verses 7 to 11. The first half of the chapter is a description of God on His throne; the last half of the chapter is the worship of God on His throne.

Now it's fascinating that this worship of God naturally follows this revelation of God. God is revealed, and what immediately happens—worship. Each time we see a manifestation of the person of God to people, they immediately fall on their faces and give Him the honor that is due to His name, and we see that in the Old Testament as well as in the New. This is what we see occurring in Revelation chapter 4. Whether it is angels or whether it is redeemed men, all before the throne of God give glory and honor to the God who sits on the throne. They fall down before Him in worship and praise and thanksgiving—not once, but over and over and over again.

So what we want to do then this morning is to learn to follow the example of worship that is set before us in this last half of Revelation chapter 4, as exemplified by the angels, and then as exemplified by the redeemed saints. In the first place then this morning, let us consider together the four angels and their worship. The four angels and their worship are spoken of in verses 7 through 9. Let's just reread those. Verses 7 to 9:

“⁷ And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. ⁹ And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,” and then it starts talking about what the saints do. But this what the angels are doing.

We were introduced to these four living beings in this passage last week as we looked at verse 6. You recall the last part of verse 6 says, “and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.” We now have a fuller description of these beasts that are spoken of here in verses 7 and 8.

Now as we look at these four angels and their worship, let’s consider first of all their person; that is, who are these people, these beasts, these creatures? And then we’re going to talk about their worship. So first of all, their persons, and then their worship.

Now there are two places in the Old Testament where we have descriptions of similar angelic beings before the throne of God. We have a description in Isaiah chapter 6, and we have a description in Ezekiel chapter 1 and in Ezekiel chapter 10. All of these descriptions—Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, and Ezekiel 10—are descriptions of God sitting on His throne, and then around the throne there are these angelic creatures giving worship to God, and of course, descriptions are given of these creatures around the throne.

In Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah calls them “seraphim.” They have, according to Isaiah, six wings. And according to Isaiah, they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” We see in Revelation that these angels have six wings, and they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Very similar.

In Ezekiel chapter 1 and in Ezekiel chapter 10, the angels that are around the throne there are called “cherubim,” and each of them has four faces—each *one* has four faces—and each one has four wings. And as I said, they’re called cherubim.

Now it appears—I say it “appears”—that the living creatures before the throne in Revelation chapter 4, most closely match the seraphim that are described in Isaiah chapter 6. There are some who say that they’re the cherubim of Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10. But it seems pretty clear to me that they are much more closely identified with, and manifest the characteristics of, the seraphim in Isaiah chapter 6.

So I’d like to turn for just a moment to Isaiah chapter 6 and notice together Isaiah chapter 6, verses 1 through 8, just to pick up the Old Testament picture of what is being talked about in the book of Revelation. You recall that we have said that the book of Revelation is to be understood in light of the Old Testament. And these strange figures and symbols that are used in the book of Revelation can all be found in the Old Testament. All right? Here we are, Isaiah chapter 6:

“¹In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.” So here is Revelation chapter 4, verses 1 to 6, the first half of our chapter. Verse 2: “²Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with [two] he covered his face, and with [two] he covered his feet, and with [two] he did fly.

“³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. ⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.” You remember the imagery of the thunders and the lightnings proceeding from the throne in Revelation chapter 4.

“⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. ⁶ Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷ and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. ⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

Now please turn back to Revelation chapter 4. As I said, I think that these angels in Revelation chapter 4 most closely correspond with the seraphim of Isaiah chapter 6. Both have six wings and both use the threefold description of holiness to God in their worship. However, several details are added to the description of these angels that are omitted by Isaiah. It’s not that these angels in Isaiah didn’t have these characteristics, it’s just that Isaiah didn’t happen to mention them. I want you to notice the particular description that John gives of these angels, which John calls “living creatures.” In the Old King James, it calls them “beasts.” The New King James has “living creatures,” which I think is a much better translation. A beast would imply the idea of an animal, and these are in fact living creatures—something more than just a mere animal.

Notice then first of all, their location. In Revelation 4, verse 6b, it says, “and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.” So it says that these seraphim are in the midst of the throne and round about the throne. In other words, these angels are right up next to the throne. They are right beside it. In fact, Isaiah says, they’re hovering above it. And you recall in the Holy of Holies, where you had the ark, you remember that the angels on the ark had their wings touching right over the mercy seat, which is where the shekina glory of God dwelt. And it was a picture of what heaven looks like. The earthly tabernacle was a model, shaped after the heavenly tabernacle. So these four angels are next to the throne, and the implication here is that they’re on the four sides of the throne.

Now you recall that when we studied biblical numerology together, “four” conveyed the concept of the whole world, as described by the four points of the compass—north, south, east, and west. So these four angels stand on the four sides of the throne of God, ready to carry out any direction that He gives to them, to any point on the face of the earth, or anywhere in the universe, for that matter. So where is their position? Their position is right next to the throne, on the four sides of the throne, ready to carry out the will of God in any direction.

Notice secondly their attributes. It says in verse 6 that they are full of eyes, before and behind. What this is, is just a symbolic description of the fact that these angels are ever vigilant. You know kids who say, “My mom’s got eyes in the back of her head.” What do they mean by that? You can’t get away with anything with mom, right? She sees it all. That’s what’s being said

here. They're full of eyes before and behind; in other words, these angels are ever vigilant, nothing escapes their notice, nothing is hidden from them, they overlook nothing, they see everything, no one sneaks anything past them.

In verse 7, it says, "The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." John then tells us that these four angels exhibit similarities to these four beings, and they represent their best characteristics and qualities. So he likens them to a lion, a calf—an ox is the idea, a man, and an eagle.

So what this seems to indicate is that these seraphim possess majesty, like a lion; they possess strength, like an ox; they possess intelligence, like a man; and they possess swiftness, like an eagle. Majesty, strength, intelligence, and swiftness. Those are the things that mark these four creatures, and these are the characteristics that mark these seraphim, these four angels.

The point is this: these angels reflect all that is the highest and the best in God's created order, whether it is the wild animals, represented by the lion; the domestic animals, represented by the ox; the flying animals, represented by the eagle; or mankind itself. The angels possess and reflect the best of every order of created being. I'll repeat that: The angels possess and reflect the best of every order of created being.

Now why is this? The angels are the highest of all created beings. Even when man was made, he was made - what? A little lower than the angels. The angels, therefore, since they are the highest of all created beings, possess the best attributes that any created beings could have. So the highest of the wild animals, the lion—the angels possessed that majesty; the highest and the best of the domestic animals, the ox—the strength that he has, the angels possess that strength; the highest of God's other created beings, mankind—the intelligence he has, the angels possessed that; and the highest of the flying creatures, the birds, the eagle—the swiftness that he has, the ability to move from point A to point B effortlessly, the angels possessed that attribute.

It says in verse 8 that each of these angels had six wings. Isaiah chapter 6, which we just read, tells us that with two of those wings, he covered his feet, showing that he was not worthy to stand in the presence of God; and with two of those wings, he covered his face, showing he was not worthy to look upon God. Here we see the expression of deep humility on the part of these angels. Though they are the highest creation of God, bar none, yet they know they are nothing before God. They are not to be compared with God, and they're not worthy to be in the presence of God, even sinless angels, merely because of their creatureliness—not because of their sinfulness, they're not sinful, but just because they're creatures who are not to be compared with God and are not worthy to be in the presence of God.

Isaiah then tells us in Isaiah 6 that with two wings, he did fly. Remember? With two he covered his feet, two he covered his face, with two he did fly. This shows the seraphim's readiness to promptly carry out the commands *from* the throne, to do whatever duty and to go to whatever

destination God has appointed him to. And you remember the seraphim were sent from the throne to pick up that coal and to put it on the lips of Isaiah. So these angels with these two wings are ever ready to go and carry out the will and the command of God, whatever it may be.

So humility and zeal mark these angels in the use of their six wings. Humility—covering their feet, they're not worthy to stand in the presence of God; covering their face, they're not worthy to look upon God. And then zeal—the two wings ready to carry out the command of God to the four corners of the earth, whatever it may be and whatever God commands them to do.

Now it goes on to say in verse 8 that “they were full of eyes within.” You remember back up in verse 6, it says they were “full of eyes before and behind.” Those were eyes that were looking outward—before and behind. But now we've got eyes within. And just as the eyes that were outward were showing that they were ever vigilant with what was going on around them, so that nothing escaped their notice, so that they overlooked nothing, so they saw everything, so that no one snuck anything by them; these eyes within convey to us the idea that they have acute self-awareness and self-knowledge. They know exactly who they are and they do not deceive themselves about who they are within themselves in any regard. Their self-perception is without deceit, and they see themselves for who they really are.

Now our hearts are deceitful, aren't they? And what man or what woman really knows themselves? Aren't you kind of surprised from time to time by things you say and things you do? You thought, I didn't think I had the capacity to do that. It may be something good, it may be something bad. It says, In that day we will know even as we are known. But until then, there is much about ourselves that we don't understand. That is not the case with these angels.

So then, this is who the angels are in their person. They are immediately next to the throne of God; they are acutely aware of everything around them and everything inside of them; they possess the highest attributes of all creatures in God's created order; and they are filled with humility and zeal to serve God at the moment He gives them a command. That's who the angels are in their person.

Secondly, let's consider together who the angels are in their worship. Now the worship of these angels is continuous. Notice it says in the middle part of verse 8, “And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” And verse 9 tells us that what they're doing there is giving “glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever.” That's their worship. The last half of verse 8 describes, and verse 9 describes, what it is that they are *doing* when they say those things.

So we see the worship of these angels is continuous. They have unlimited energy and strength, they never grow tired, they never need to go to sleep, they never need a break. They never cease, day and night, giving praise to God. God's glory is constant, and therefore God's praise needs to be continuous. There is never a moment when God's glory is shining forth, that God's praise should not be coming forth.

Now this praise to God consists of three things: a declaration of who He is; a declaration of the attributes He possesses; and a declaration of the eternality of His being. So let's talk first of all about this declaration of who He is. Three times, God is declared to be holy. Who is God? God is holy, holy, holy. The threefold repetition is, I think, first of all a reference to His Trinitarian nature—the Father is holy, the Son is holy, and the Spirit is holy. You recall when we studied numerology that the number three conveyed the concept of perfection. Thus, the threefold description of holiness to God is a reference to not only His Trinitarian nature, it's also a declaration of the perfection of that holiness. Anytime something comes in a three, it's saying, That is perfect.

His purity of character, His separation from sin is absolute, total, complete, and perfect. God will not sin, God cannot sin, God never has sinned, God never will sin. His actions will have been, are now, and shall always be perfect, and His judgments will always and without exception be righteous. He is a holy God. What's interesting is that this is the perfection that they choose to focus on.

You never find anywhere in the Scriptures where people say of God, Omnipotent, omnipotent, omnipotent; or, Loving, loving, loving. Because, you know, those things could not and would not exist as they are without His holiness. His holiness informs all of His actions, all of His attitudes, all of His plans and purposes. His holiness defines Him. Indeed, it says in Psalm 90 that God's holiness is His beauty.

The angels not only make a declaration of who He is, secondly, they talk about the attributes He possesses, and they identify this by the name that they give to Him. They say of Him that He is the Lord God Almighty. Now when they say that He is the Lord God Almighty, this name, first of all, declares His sovereignty. He is the Lord! He's the Lord over all things, and He's the Lord over all beings.

Secondly, this name declares His authority. He's not only the Lord, He's the Lord—what?—God. He is God. And this term God is a declaration of the fact that He is the highest authority in the universe, from whom there is no appeal. Now we talk about people and their gods, right? The definition of anyone's god is the definition of the being to whom he yields the highest authority. Whatever has the highest authority in his life, that is his god. And it's the nature of God that He is the highest authority, and there is no authority above Him.

(At this point I became a little confused in my notes and presentation, so I have modified the next three paragraphs of the transcript to say what I actually intended to say)

Thirdly, this name not only declares His sovereignty - He is Lord; it not only declares His authority - He is God; but this name also declares His power, He is the Almighty. As the Almighty, there are no limits to His power, so that there is nothing we wills to do, that He is unable to do. There is nothing too hard for Him.

And then, third of all, the angels make a declaration of not only who He is and the attributes He possesses, but they also make a declaration of the eternality of His being. There is a declaration of His eternality, because it says of Him, “which was, and is, and is to come.” He is the God who was, and is, and is to come. He always has been, He is now, He always will be. He will outlast every enemy the church has; they will die, but He lives forever.

So we see a Holy, Sovereign, Authoritative, Almighty God, who lives forever and ever. Understanding that the God we serve is a God like this is a great comfort to persecuted embattled believers, who must endure spiritual warfare and persecution at the hands of the wicked.

Now verse 9 tells us exactly what it is these angels are doing. It says in verse 9, “And when those beasts give”—now here’s what they’re doing—“glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne.” Verse 9 tells us exactly what it is these angels are doing as they utter the phrase, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” What are they doing when they’re saying that? They are giving glory and honor and thanks to the eternal God who sits on the throne. In a word, they are giving God worship.

This, then, is how God is to be worshiped. We are to speak of His attributes. We are to speak of His identity. We are to speak of His nature. We’re to do so with reverence and with conviction and with enthusiasm, and with all the strength and all the time that we possess. And that’s how we worship. So the greater and more perfect your understanding of God, the greater and more powerful is your ability to worship. And you know, what passes for worship in our churches in this day and age isn’t worship at all, because they’re not preaching *God*. And when you don’t preach God, people have nothing to worship. They wind up preaching man and how wonderful people are, and health and wealth—and *that’s* what people worship.

So what we see in the book of Revelation is intensely theological, it is intensely Godcentered. We have Christ in chapter 1, and we have Christ speaking in chapters 2 and 3. Then we have God sitting on the throne in chapter 4, and in chapter 5, the Lord Jesus taking the book out of the hand of Him sitting on the throne. The first five chapters are all about *God*.

And you see Christ in chapter 1, God on the throne in chapter 4, and the church sandwiched inbetween them in chapters 2 and 3. And if God isn’t the bookend—this beginning and the ending of everything we do as a church—then we cease to be a church of Jesus Christ.

So it is as they see the greatness of God sitting on the throne in verses 1 to 6 that they fall down and worship in verses 7 to 9. A great God leads to great worship, a little god leads to little worship. That’s why, people, we have to be, above all else, *theologians*; that is, those who study God. And the better we know our God, the stronger we will be, and the greater exploits we will do. As the Scripture says, The people who do know their God will be strong, and do exploits.

Well that leads us then to our second major point this morning. Having seen the four angels and their worship in verses 7 to 9, notice secondly the twentyfour elders and their worship in verses 10 and 11.

Now it says in verse 10, upon seeing and hearing the worship the angels are engaging in, “the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

As we said, these twentyfour elders represent the redeemed church in heaven. And when the angels offer glory and honor and thanksgiving to God who sits on the throne, the saints do not simply sit back and watch. Worship is not a spectator sport, where some worship while others merely observe. If a soul is a redeemed soul, it is always a worshiping soul and it *will not* sit by idly while others worship. The Christian will not be busy doing something else while corporate worship is being carried out by others. The saved soul cannot restrain itself. It does not want to restrain itself. It bursts forth with desire to worship the God it loves, and would rather worship than do anything else.

And so, when the angels give glory and thanks and honor to God on the throne, the church immediately joins in. Verse 10: “the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.”

Now we notice in verse 10 the twentyfour elders take a position of humility before the enthroned Father and fall down on their faces before Him. We saw the humility of the angels, covering their feet, covering their faces, and now we see the humility of the twentyfour elders. Humility befits any creature before the throne of God.

So humility is always the disposition of the true worshiper. The angels showed humility, as I said, by covering their feet and faces, and the elders show humility by falling on their faces before God. And so when we come to worship God, the posture of a bowed and humble heart that recognizes its own unworthiness and the infinite superiority of God over us, is the only fitting position for us to be in. The angels see the vast distance between themselves and God because He is infinite and they are finite. He is the creator, and they are the creature. We not only have those categories, but also the stark contrast that He is holy and we are sinful. So we have even more reason than the angels to be humbled before the throne of God.

Now when these twentyfour elders fall down to worship Him who liveth forever and ever, it says they cast their crowns before the throne. We saw last week when we studied verse 4 that these twentyfour elders had on their heads crowns of gold. We said that these crowns are symbols of rule and authority. Kings put crowns on their heads to show that they are the king, right?

So a crown is a symbol of rule and authority, and this rule and authority that the saints have is that which is given to them. This rule and authority that saints have is that they are given the privilege of sharing in the rule of Christ over the nations as a reward for overcoming the temptations of Satan and for remaining loyal to Christ during their pilgrimage on earth.

Turn back please to Revelation chapter 2, verses 26 and 27. Revelation 2:26, Jesus says to the church at Thyatira, “²⁶ And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power,” or authority, “over the nations: ²⁷ and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.” Now turn please to Revelation chapter 3 and verse 21. Here’s the promise to the church at Laodicea: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

So you know what happens when you die? When you die, and your soul goes to heaven, you’re seated on a throne, you’re given a crown, and you share in Christ’s rule over the earth until He comes again. That’s what you’re doing. You’re not there just playing a harp or something, right? You are sitting with Christ in His throne, running the world. Now that’s what these twentyfour elders—which represent the glorified church in heaven, Old Testament and New Testament—that’s what they’re doing.

Now what happens when this worship happens, is they take those crowns, those symbols of authority that were given to them as a reward for their overcoming, and it says they cast them down. They bow, and they cast their crowns before the Lord Jesus, before God the Father sitting on the throne. We’re told in Revelation 1:6 that Christ has made us kings and priests unto God, and these twentyfour elders representing the redeemed people of God have crowns of kingly rule and authority on their heads. But this does not make them think they are something special, like the kings of the earth do. The kings of the earth think, I’m special! I’m the king! Are these twentyfour elders thinking they’re something special? Are they full of self-importance, looking for others to give them honor? They are not. They are casting down their crowns before the throne of God in acknowledgement that their authority is derived from God.

You know, I heard about a police chief, his name escapes me at the moment, and every time he appears before a civilian audience, he always salutes them. And he was asked, Why are you saluting a civilian audience? and he says, Because I derive my authority from them. I’m telling them that they are my superior officers.

So what the saints are doing is they’re casting their crowns before God, saying, You are my superior, and any authority I have is derived from you. I don’t get it from myself, from my worthiness. I get it from you. So they are acknowledging that only God has authority, and any other authority in the universe is derived from Him, and is dependent upon Him, and owes its allegiance to Him. So by casting down their crowns before God, they are openly confessing that God has authority over them.

But not only do we see their actions of worship, we also hear their words of worship. Their actions are that they bow down and cast their crowns. And now we have their words in verse 11, notice: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

So what they’re saying in verse 11 is, Lord, you are worthy to receive from me and from every other created being, an open confession of the glory you have, the honor you deserve, and the power you exercise. That’s all wrapped up in that little word, “to receive.” To receive from whom? To receive from me. What? Glory. To receive from me, honor. To receive from me, power—that is, the ascription of glory, the ascription of honor, the ascription of power. You’re worthy, God, to receive those things from me as expressions of worship; to acknowledge that you have glory, you have honor, and you have power. And that glory you have and the honor you deserve and the power you exercise are clearly seen, Father, by the creation you’ve made. Notice, that’s the reason they supply. The praise they give is, God is worthy to be declared to have glory and honor and power. Why? Because He’s created all things. “And for thy pleasure, they are and were created.” Creation was conceived, and creation was produced by the will of God. And creation was conceived and produced by the will of God for the pleasure of God and for the purpose of bringing glory to God. Psalm 19:1—“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. ²Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. ³There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”

And so the creation declares who God is, and these twentyfour elders are saying, When we look at creation and we see your plan, and we see the accomplishment of that plan, that moves us to worship you and to ascribe to you glory, and to ascribe to you honor, and to ascribe to you power, because look at what you have done and what you have made. What you have made brings praise and worship to you.

Now you would think that since these twentyfour elders represent the church, they would be talking about redemption. They’ll get to that in chapter 5, okay? And so what do we praise God for? Creation *and* redemption, right? Here, the praise is for creation.

So to ascribe all that exists to mere natural processes is, of course, to rob God of His crowning glory. And this is why we will never embrace the fallacy and the fantasy of mere natural processes producing the world as we know it. God created all things, it says in verse 11. The “big bang” didn’t create them; spontaneous generation didn’t create them; evolution didn’t create them. God created them. Because mankind hates God, they try to come up with other explanations, apart from God, for what exists. So they say, Well, it all started with a big bang, and then spontaneously, life was generated out of nonlife, and then once that life was generated, a genetic mutation produced all that occurs, and there’s no need for a God.

That’s why it is so foolish for Christians to start to buy into even a part of that theory, and say, Well, yeah, God started it, but then evolution guided it—theistic evolution, right? or any number of other compromises. And you know, what’s fascinating is, time is really on our side, because

as science discovers more and more the complexity of life, more and more they're realizing the inadequacy of evolution to explain its origin. Because even the most simple cell is so irreducibly complex as to be impossible to be generated through natural processes, in terms of organization and all of its functions, and genetic mutation is entirely inadequate as a mechanism to produce the addition of information to DNA to produce new organs and limbs. And so it goes on.

Evolution would have been abandoned long ago as a scientific theory, were it not for the philosophical implications of doing so, because science simply does not support it. As Christians, we're not antiscience; science is on our side. Science is just the discovery of what God has done. My goal here isn't to move into an exposition about the fallacies of evolution, but notice what the saints are emphasizing—You have created all things. And part of the essence of our worship is recognizing that in six days, God created the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh. And therein forms the foundation of our worship of God.

So we see the angels worshipping God for who He is, in verse 8: The Lord God Almighty, who is holy, holy, holy, who was and who is and who is to come. Then we see the saints worshipping God for what He has done, in verse 11: You created all things. And so we worship God for who He is, like the angels do, and we worship God for what He has done, like the saints do. And evil kings and wicked persecutors are going to come and go, but He who lives forever and ever, He who is and who was and who is to come, will reign forever.

I want you to notice the emphasis on the eternity of God in this chapter. Notice it says in the latter part of verse 8, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Latter part of verse 9: "who liveth for ever and ever." Latter part of verse 10: "worship him that liveth for ever and ever." Three times in this worship, the eternity of God is repeatedly declared. Now why is that? Because this book was written to a persecuted church. The church has been being persecuted for the last 2,000 years. But one of the things we recognize is—You know what? These wicked people who persecute us are going to come and they're going to go. But God Himself goes on and on. Stalin went away, Lenin went away, fill in the blank with whomever else has persecuted the church—Mao Tse tung went away. But who stayed? God. He was there with His church before these people ever showed up; He was there with His church while they were alive; He's there with His church after they leave. So we don't need to worry about persecutors. They're temporary. God is eternal.

So don't fear temporal kings, like Domitian, who was alive at this point in history, when this book was written. Don't worry about temporal kings like Domitian and those who follow him. They will perish, but God will live forever and ever, and He reigns forever and ever. So Domitian comes along and says, You have to burn a pinch of incense and you have to say, Caesar is lord. They claim to be lord over you, but there is only one enthroned Lord to whom you are to bow and to recognize as Lord. And it may seem to us that men are in control of this world, but that is a delusion. God made them all, God is sovereign over them all, and God will defeat them all.

So when we begin to tremble under the persecution of men, let us lift our eyes, where? To the throne in heaven, and from that vision draw strength and hope and encouragement for the battle here below. The book of Revelation is saturated with references to the throne, because that is the sole comfort a persecuted church has.

But not only it is a sole comfort, it is a sufficient comfort. When you know that God is in control, and while wicked men are allowed to do their thing—look at the story of Job—, what was the outcome? And that's where we have to keep our vision and our focus.

God has not abandoned the world. It is *His* world. He made all things to serve His will and pleasure and purpose, and they will. And every self-exalting king will cast his crown at the feet of Jesus when He returns, and every knee will bow to Jesus and confess *Him* to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Evil is in the world, but evil is not in control of the world, God is. Let us find comfort in that. Shall we pray together.

Father, we thank you that our God is an enthroned God. You are the Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. You are the creator of the heavens and the earth. So, Father, we recognize You as the one who is sovereign over all, the one who has ultimate authority over all, the one who is all-powerful. Father, we thank you for who you are.

And our Lord, we pray that we might be filled with a larger vision of God than we've ever had—not one concocted out of our own imagination, not one based on some sort of science fiction fantasy, but an understanding of God extracted out of the Scriptures.

Father, help us then to understand this word, to live in this word, to revel in this word, and have it shape the framework of our understanding of life and events. Father, fill us with faith so that we might be bold and strong in our God in the day of persecution. Father, may we go forward in strength and with courage and with joy and with confidence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.