

Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe

The Essentials of True Biblical Worship

Revelation 4:10-11

As we open to Rev. 4:10, we are looking at the other side of the worship spectrum.

Last time we saw what always makes worship unacceptable to God. This week we are looking at what always makes our worship acceptable and pleasing to God.

As we read these words, think about what you are looking at as we see a picture of the 24 elders; most likely, each of these 24 men seated on the inner circle of the Throne were formerly imperfect sinners, saved by grace, cleansed each day by the sacrifice of Christ, glorified at the moment of their death, and now in Heaven offering perfected worship.

Did you catch one very profound truth? Each servant of God that we will ever find in Heaven was once an imperfect servant of God, the entire time they lived on Earth.

Truth # 1: All Believers, in Every Time Period, Have Always Been Imperfect, All throughout Their Lives

One of the most amazing truths of God's Word is that God accepts and uses imperfect people. The simplest and most accurate description of the Apostles would be: twelve imperfect men. The simplest and most accurate description of the John, Paul, Peter, Noah, Daniel, Moses, Hannah, and even Mary would be: they each were imperfect servants.

The same could be said for every servant, every saint, every Christian home, and every Christian marriage. The simplest and most accurate description of all we do, and are, is: **imperfect**.

Truth # 2: Imperfect Saints that are Surrendered Can Offer Worship that God Treasures and Rewards

So what is it that makes what we do acceptable, pleasing to God, lasting, golden like the crowns of Heaven, and eternal? Submission. In the verses we have before us this morning portrays the submission God delights in.

The elders (who were formerly imperfect earthly saints) do a visual for us as they worship in Heaven: they humbly fall on their faces, bowing submissively before Christ

the King, and as an offering of worship, lay their golden crowns at His feet.

They humbly fall on their faces in Heaven, because they had humbly worshipped on Earth. They submissively bow in Heaven, because they had submissively bowed on Earth.

They offer golden crowns in Heaven, because God declares their worship on Earth was tested as they offered it, and was found to be like gold. Remember what God has already told us in I Corinthians 3:10-13, that all of our good works will go through the fires of refinement to see what is true gold.

As we open to Revelation 4:10 look again at what is perhaps the most well known aspect of worship in Heaven. Note first the elders, note what they do, and then note what the Bible says they actually cast at the feet of Jesus:

Rev. 4:10-11, and the twenty-four elders **fall down before Him** who sits on the throne and **worship Him** who lives forever and ever, and **cast their crowns before the throne**, saying:¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had **crowns of gold** on their heads.

Pray

As John sat to write the scenes of Revelation unfolding before his eyes, the scene of the 24 elders, kneeling, and casting their crowns before the Throne of God the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: was a powerful image in the minds of the early church.

Truth # 3: The 24 Elders Casting Crowns Portray their Surrendered Lives as They Offer Worship to God

Often, our distance from the history of past events can lessen the impact of some of these images. To us, it is wonderful that the elders (representing all believers) get to worship in such a beautiful way; but there is even more beauty in the picture.

First-century readers in churches across the Empire, would have been reminded of the much-celebrated event in their Empire. During Nero's final two years as Emperor (AD 66-68) there was the much celebrated, and single most expensive event in Rome's history: the visit of the Parthian prince Tiridates.

To begin the rule of Rome over this distant land, Nero crowned Tiridates, as king of Armenia. The sequence to show this vassal king's submission was planned. Once he was

crowned, he fell down before Nero publicly in worship. **Then, as a symbol of his submission, he laid his crown at Nero's feet.**

This event was made into an ongoing performance in the theaters where characters celebrated Rome's subjugation of far away enemies; so the event lived on in theaters across the empire.

This picture of the 24 elders casting their crowns at Christ's feet is a very powerful lesson in worship. They were submissive, not just acting like it, neither were they forced to take off their crowns. It was the voluntary act of adoration in worship.

God always responds to submission, surrender, and the humility it portrays. Always remember that when the wickedest Israelite king of all, Ahab, humbled himself. God was moved by Ahab's humble acts of contrition. Bowing to please God always prompts His well done.

Casting a crown at Christ's feet speaks powerfully of our absolute surrender to Him, and adoration of Him. Now for a moment, we need to define that word: **surrender**.

¹**sur•ren•der***verb*: to yield to the power, control, or possession of another upon compulsion or demand; to give (oneself) up into the power of another especially as a prisoner; to give oneself up into the power of another. ¹

Surrender is the key to true worship that God accepts. The worship that flows from a surrendered life is pleasing to Him; but from an un-surrendered life, the worship is not pleasing Him.

A life surrendered to God is moving along in the process of sanctification, which can be described as a life that is yielded, consecrated, dedicated, and Spirit-filled.

An un-surrendered life is described in the Word as unsanctified, carnal, fleshly, and quenching the Holy Spirit's work. Remember God always portrays only two positions, pleasing God or pleasing our self. With God there is no neutral, or middle ground.

Surrender = Pleasing God	Un-Surrendered = Pleasing Self
Allowing Sanctification	Resisting Sanctification
Spiritually Minded acceptable Worship	Fleshly Minded Rejected Worship
Spirit-Filled Walking	Spirit-Quenching Neglecting

Truth # 4: We can Worship God as We Surrender our Lives to Him Each Day

Turn back with me to Romans 12:1-2, where we read last week about presenting ourselves. That presentation is actually the act of surrender. We give ourselves over to

¹ Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

the power of the Lord.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies [that is the surrender element that pleases God] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Think about the scene around the Throne with those 24 elders bowing face down in Heaven, and now think of how to personalize that same humble and adoring worship attitude in your heart, as an act of surrender.

There is a song we sing that captures the beauty of the 24 elders and invites us to join in the offering. Here are the words of that song, read them with me and think of making that surrender to worship the Lord, as His servant today:

We fall down
and lay our crowns
At the feet of Jesus

The greatness of
Your Mercy and love
At the feet of Jesus

And we cry holy, holy, holy
And we cry holy, holy, holy
And we cry holy, holy, holy
Is the lamb

Bowing as an eternal picture of surrender; and laying crowns at His feet is what these 24 elders are doing over and over, that is so powerful.

The amazing truth is that as long as we surrender to Him, Jesus accepts our worship, from our lives imperfect as they are. As we surrender we confess any sins and that brings glory to Him. The only part of our lives Christ rejects are the un-surrendered ones.

Truth # 5: Revelation Shows us the Elements of Surrendered Worship

All that the Bible has taught about worship is applied in the book of Revelation, as Jesus, who is God the Son, comes down and walks among His servants, the saints of His Church: and watches their worship. Here are the four elements of True Biblical Worship that are emphasized in these three chapters.

1. Surrendered Worshippers: offer worship that Pleases God Because it Starts with, and Flows from the Words that God Gave to Us (Revelation 1:1)

The way to offer worship that pleases God is only found only in His Word.

God's Word is vital to us, and the pathway God left for us to approach Him in our worship. In John 4:24 we heard Jesus say that we are to worship God in Spirit and in truth: "God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Here in Revelation 1:1 we see the "Revelation" which God gave His servants so we can please Him by approaching Him with the truth, that is: based upon the revealed Word of God. Worship that is to be accepted by God must be Word-guided, and Word-based. So first, True Biblical Worship: starts with and flows from the Word that God gave to us (Revelation 1:1).

Do you stop to eat from God's Word so that you can live each day in step with God? We were created to worship or glorify God. He wants our worship. If we desire to please Him, we will hunger and thirst for Him in His Word: our only way of knowing how to properly worship Him.

2. Surrendered Worshippers: come boldly before God to offer acceptable worship because they come "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10)

John was able to see God in His Glory, worship Him as King, all because of the power of the regenerating, indwelling Holy Spirit.

Paul says in Philippians 3:3 that those who are saved worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no hope of salvation by fleshly efforts.

The Spirit quickens the flesh profits nothing John 6:63, only spiritual worship prompted by the Spirit can please God.

Principle 2: True Biblical Worship: is only available for those who are "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10).

Do you know that you have the Spirit of God dwelling within, the seal of every true born-again believer? The only worship God accepts comes from the power of His Spirit within us. Our connection to God, is only powered by His Spirit. To worship in an acceptable way we must not quench the power of the Holy Spirit. Anything that diminishes His power we must avoid at all costs.

3. Surrendered Worshippers: long to see Christ's Beauty and as they do so they fall in reverence before Him (Revelation 1:17)

When John turns and sees Jesus as the Risen King of Kings, he falls before Him.

John falls before Christ just like just like the disciples when the sleeping Christ was awakened and stilled the storm. Mk. 4:39, 41 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Principle 3: True Biblical Worship: involves seeing Christ's beauty & falling in reverence before Him (Revelation 1:17).

We were created to glorify God. We most glorify Him by our adoring worship. Worship flows from reverence. Do you come in reverence, bowing before Him? Are you seeking with all your heart to find Christ in His Word? He said we only find Him in worship, when we "seek Him with all our hearts".

4. Surrendered Worshippers: worship the way God's Word instructs because we know Christ is always watching and testing our worship (Revelation 2:23)

Jesus reminds us that He walks about the Church as we gather (Rev. 2:1), to see if we are offering to Him the worship He desires, in the way He desires.

Jesus is examining our hearts and minds as we live, work, and worship. Jesus declares in Rev. 2:23: "and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."

Principle 4: True Biblical Worship: Is Always Being Watched and Tested by Christ (Revelation 2:1)

What does Jesus see each day as He watches? Are there days we are without time to worship? Are there days we are un-surrendered, so that we become worship-less? Are there days we are unconsecrated, so we neglect to adore and honor Him? Whether we eat, or drink, or anything we do, it is all to be done for the glory of the One we worship.

5. Surrendered Worshippers: know their worship rises to merge with the worship around the Throne of our King (Revelation 4:1)

The 24 elders hold the bowls of collected prayers (Rev. 5:8) of the saints that have been offered in worship; and later (Rev. 8:3) angels mix those prayers with incense and coals from the altar, and pour them out.

Only this worship scene around God's Throne explains why God waits so long. He waits to combine our prayers with His plan and pour them out together.

Principle 5: True Biblical Worship: Rises to Merge with the Worship Around the Throne of our King (Revelation 4:1)

Do you realize that each time you adore and honor the Lord by submitting to His Word, confess a sin, asking for cleansing, or obeying His Word: that worship rises and merges with the majestic offering that always surrounds His Throne?

6. Surrendered Worshippers: are focused upon offering their worship to God Himself and none other (Revelation 4:2-7)

Everything above us is pointed at the King of Heaven's Throne.

Our King is the Supreme Attraction up there. For of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things in Romans 11:36: For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

God said on the Mount of Transfiguration to focus on Christ, nothing else. While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

Principle 6: Surrendered Worshippers: Are Focused upon Offering Their Worship to God Himself and None Other (Revelation 4:2-7)

This point brings us back to where we started. Surrender is the key to acceptable worship. Bowing to the Lord, surrendering every part of life we know of, to Him. That is how we focus our life in worship offered to God alone.

To renew that surrender, why not join me in those words we read earlier? Please stand, as we bow our hearts and lives, breathe out a personal offering prayer of surrender: to your King. Tell Him you are His, He can do whatever pleases Himself in and with your life.

Now, look up with me at these words, and as we sing them, bow in adoration, worship through surrender, give your all to your King!

In Romans 12:1-2 we read last week about presenting ourselves. That presentation is actually the act of surrender. We give ourselves over to the power of the Lord. Think about the scene in Heaven, and now think of how to personalize this act of surrender.

We fall down
and lay our crowns
At the feet of Jesus
The greatness of
Your Mercy and love
At the feet of Jesus
And we cry holy, holy, holy
And we cry holy, holy, holy
And we cry holy, holy, holy
Is the lamb