

Revelation
He is Worthy! (Part 2)
Revelation 4-5
November 7, 2021
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Revelation as we continue to make our way through this magnificent book. It's been good already and it's getting better. We're looking forward to see how all of this continues to unfold as we have gone now from earth to Heaven in Revelation 4. Let me read it for us as we begin our study. You follow along in your copy of God's Word. Revelation chapter 4:

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in Heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in Heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. "And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever

and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

Revelation chapters 4 and 5 really begin the heart of this book. The great lesson of these two chapters together is this: God is infinitely worthy to sit on the universe’s throne and to judge its treasonous rebellion against Him, and He will delegate that judgment to His only Son. These chapters are not merely stuck here to give us a view of Heaven, rather they are a prelude to the judgments that God will unleash on the earth during the Great Tribulation. Just to remind you of an overview of these two chapters, in chapter 4 we have the scene in Heaven: The Father and the throne. In chapter 5 we have the search in Heaven: The Lamb and the Book.

Now last time we started, and tonight I want us to finish, our study of chapter 4, the scene in Heaven, the Father and the throne. It begins in verses 1 and 2 with the apostle’s invitation to God’s throne. Notice verse 1, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in Heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me,” this is Jesus Christ, “said, ‘Come up here’”. So, in this vision that John received on the island of Patmos, Jesus Christ ordered him to come up to Heaven in his vision. The reason, verse 1 goes on to say, “and I will show you what must take place after these things”. That introduces the third great and last division of this book. You remember back in Revelation 1:19, Jesus told John, I want you to write the things which you have seen, the vision of chapter 1, the things which are, the churches in chapters 2 and 3, and the things which will take place after these things, chapters 4-22. In these chapters we transition from the church age to the events during and after the Tribulation. So that’s the invitation to God’s throne.

Last time we also saw the startling revelation of God’s throne. It begins with a sight of the throne of God Himself. Verse 2 says, “and behold, a throne was standing in Heaven”, and then there’s a view of the person of God, “and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance”. John’s vision of Heaven’s throne and the one who occupies it, as we noted last time, is a picture of the blazing brilliance of a diamond reflecting the

colors of the rainbow and that of a blood red stone, the sardius. It's a picture of God's glory for sure, but as we noted, it's also a reminder of the fire of His looming wrath.

Then we considered the magnificent setting around God's throne. Beginning in the middle of verse 3 and running down through verse 8. Around the throne of God, John saw several things. First of all, he saw an emerald rainbow. Verse 3 says, "and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance". As we noted, this is a reminder. The rainbow is always a reminder of the fact that God brings judgment, but in that judgement, He always honors His covenant promise. He is always faithful to preserve and protect His own. It's a reminder that God's wrath will never come at the expense of His promises and His covenant faithfulness.

Secondly, around the throne, John saw 24 elders. Verse 4, "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads". Now last time I gave you several arguments for the fact that these 24 elders are not an order of angelic beings, as some would argue, but rather represent believers, probably all believers, Old and New Testament. 12 representing the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel and true believers in Israel, and 12 representing the 12 apostles and the New Testament church. There are references to both of these later in the book as we noted. Now that's where we left off last time.

So, we're still looking at what's surrounding the throne of God in Heaven. And thirdly, he saw thunder sounds and lightning. Verse 5 says, "Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder". Now the fact that these come out from the throne imply that these majestic sounds proceed from God Himself. When these descriptions, "thunder", "lightning", and "sounds", are used together in the Old Testament, the word "sounds" most often refers to the roar of a storm. We understand that here in North Texas. You not only have, in the midst of the storms that come, the thunder and the lightning but there is the roar of the storm itself, and that's likely what this expression "sounds" refers to. These expressions or displays were accompanying the presence of God at Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19:16, "So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled". So, these

things accompanied the presence of God. In the Old Testament if you chase thunder and lightning and God's presence together, you will find that they most often represent God's glory. But at times, they also imply His judgment. Go back to Ezekiel chapter 1. There's a lot of crossover between the first chapter of Ezekiel and these two chapters in Revelation because here we see a vision of God as well. Notice in Ezekiel 1:4, "As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire". And then you have the war chariot, the war throne of God, and the appearance of God Himself on it. Go down to verse 13, "In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire". Verse 24, "I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went," there's the roar, "like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings". So, you see in Ezekiel 1 as God prepares to judge His people, His presence is accompanied by the sound of a storm with lightning and thunder. The same thing is true when you look at the book of Revelation. Turn to Revelation 8. Here in this book, these same displays imply God's displeasure and His judgment. Look at Revelation 8:5, this comes with the seventh seal, "Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake". So, you see these displays tend to come along with God's judgment. Look at Revelation 11:19. This is with the seventh trumpet. It says, "And the temple of God which is in Heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm". Go over to Revelation 16:18. This is with the seventh bowl of judgment. "And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty." When you go back to chapter 4, remember this is a prelude to what's coming in The Great Tribulation, this thunder and lightning and the roaring of a storm give a vivid notice to John and to all who witnessed it that God's wrath is coming. It's looming on the horizon.

The fourth thing that he saw around the throne of God was seven torches. Revelation 4:5, “And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne”. Now you’ll remember back in Revelation 1, there were lampstands that held clay or metal lamps filled with olive oil with a wick in them, the traditional lamp that you think of, and these stands were to support them, to hold them up inside the house. That’s not the word used here. This word for lamps refers to torches that are used outdoors. Typically, they were wooden clubs with cloth wound around one end and then soaked in something like pitch or resin. You’ll notice these torches were burning. They were blazing with fire. What’s the significance of these torches? Well he tells us here, “which are the seven Spirits of God”. Now don’t be confused by that expression. Most often in the book of Revelation, the Holy Spirit is referred to as one person. For example, in Revelation 3:6, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit”, singular, “says to the churches”. The Holy Spirit is one, but there are other times when the Spirit is referred to as the seven Spirits. We saw that even back in Revelation 3:1. We see it here. We’ll see it in Revelation 5:6. And here, seven lamps of fire pointing to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referred to as seven Spirits likely, as we noted in chapter 1, referring to Zechariah 4:1-10 where you have the menorah, the lampstand, with seven lamps. Those would have been a massive candelabra with massive flames. It’s interesting as well, that throughout this book, we’ll see it as it unfolds, fire symbolizes God’s judgement, His wrath, and I think that’s likely true here as well. The Spirit is presented as seven torches to remind us again, this overwhelming picture and this looming sense, that God, as patient as He is, has had enough and man’s rebellion will come to an end. So, the Spirit is represented as these torches. When I think about that, I’m reminded that the Holy Spirit who comforts God’s people is a raging fire that consumes God’s enemies.

Fifthly, he saw a sea of glass. Verse 6, “and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal”. Now, it’s clear in this passage that John the apostle struggles to describe what he saw. He keeps saying like this and like that, and the appearance of this and the appearance of that. It’s because it’s not those things, but he’s desperately to connect us, who are earthbound, to what he saw in Heaven. So, he’s using images that connect us to that. Here as he looks, stretching out in front of God’s throne, was something that reminded him of a sea made of glass. And this sea of glass sparkled like crystal. We’ve seen this before. In Exodus 24:10, the elders of Israel, “saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as

clear as the sky itself”. In Ezekiel 1:22, “Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads”. This sea of glass obviously adds to the sense of awesome majesty of the scene around God Himself. Think again about God as this blazing, brilliant light. Undimmed and undimming. The light that shines forth through this massive diamond-like appearance, the sardius stone, and now a sea of glass like crystal. You can just imagine the colors reflecting and refracting around Heaven. I think the fact that the sea is as calm as glass seems to imply the calmness around God. As we’ll see, things on earth are not so calm. They’re not calm now. But they’ll be a lot less calm in the future. In the presence of God, there’s nothing but calm. Why? Because He’s in control of all things. It’s interesting if you look at Revelation 15:2, you’ll find this sea of glass is mixed with fire. Again, implying divine judgment. It’s a picture of God, isn’t it? When you study the person of God in the Old Testament, again and again, how does He describe Himself? I am gracious, compassionate, and then what? Slow to anger. Notice God does not say I never, ever get angry. He says, I am slow to anger. As I’ve shared with you before, I love the picture of that in Hebrew. In Hebrew the text literally says “God is long of nose”. It takes God a long time to get hot. But when He does, that’s what you have in the book of Revelation. God is done with mankind’s rebellion. You see it in these images and in this picture.

Next around the throne of God we meet, in verses 6-8, four living ones. Now let’s study these a little more in detail because the apostle John does. Let’s begin by considering where they are. Verse 6 says, “and in the center and around the throne”. Literally the Greek text says, “in the middle of the throne and surrounding the throne”. In the middle implies that they are intimately connected to the throne of God. And around the throne literally means “encircling” or “surrounding”. So, these majestic beings apparently form the inner circle around God’s throne. So, you can picture the throne of God, sitting in the middle of Heaven, and around it, these majestic beings. The next thing we need to consider is what they are. It simply says in our text “four living creatures”. Literally, the text says, “four living ones”. So, what exactly are these living ones? Well, throughout church history there have been some interesting, even bizarre, explanations of who or what these four living ones are. Some of the early church fathers said these, and this takes a lot of imagination, were the four New Testament gospels. For example, Irenaeus said the human face represented Matthew, the eagle, Mark, the ox, Luke, and the lion,

John. That's creative. Others have suggested that these represent the four banners or standards of Israel. Some have said they stand for the attributes of God, or others for the four main apostles. One particularly bizarre view says that they represent the four points of the Zodiac. My reaction exactly. What is clear as this story unfolds, is that these are an exalted order of angels. You'll see that in a number of different ways. But the question is, exactly what are these beings? Well there are only three possibilities. Let me just give them to you. First of all, they may be the seraphim of Isaiah 6. There are points of similarity. They are near the throne, as they are in Isaiah 6. They have six wings, as in Isaiah 6. And they praise God's holiness, as in Isaiah 6:3. So, there are points of similarity. Another possibility is that they are the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 and 10. There are similarities here as well. For example, again they are near the throne. They are called "living beings" and so are the ones in Ezekiel 1:5. There are four of them, as in Ezekiel. And, there are the faces of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle in Ezekiel 1:10. So, some say these are the seraphim. Others say no, these are the cherubim. But there are some significant differences between Revelation and Ezekiel. I didn't make a slide for this, so you'll just have to listen to me here. Let me just run through these. In Ezekiel, each of the beings has all four faces. In Revelation, each has one face. In Ezekiel, the cherubim have only four wings. In Revelation, each has six wings. In Ezekiel, the wheels are full of eyes, and in Revelation, the beings are full of eyes. In Ezekiel, the beings have wheels, kind of like gyroscopes. In Revelation, there are no wheels mentioned. In Ezekiel, the throne is above the cherubim. In Revelation, these creatures surround the throne. Now all of those differences lead to a lot of conjecture. Some say John is just taking bits and pieces and sort of being creative. I think a better place to go is a third option, and that is that these beings, these living ones in Revelation 4, are a distinct class of angelic beings not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, but they are the exalted guardians of God's throne. As Thomas puts it in his commentary, "They are an exalted, angelic order engaged in worship who bear a special relationship to those angelic beings described in Ezekiel and Isaiah". In other words, they are not the seraphim. They are not the cherubim. They are a separate exalted, angelic order, but they bear resemblances in some ways to both of those groups. I think this is the most satisfying answer. As we'll see when we get the chapter 6, particularly verses 1-7, these beings are especially associated with the outpouring of God's wrath. They are involved in God's judgment on this planet.

We've seen where they are. They are near the throne of God, connected intimately to the throne of God, and immediately they are surrounding the throne of God. We've seen what they are. A special angelic order. Look at what they see in verse 6. It says they "are full of eyes in front and behind". Eyes imply intelligence, perception. Again, Thomas writes, "Nothing relevant to their sphere of responsibility happens without their knowledge". This doesn't mean they're omniscient. It means that they're able to perceive everything necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. They're always alert to all of those things that have to do with their duty and they miss absolutely nothing. Some of you moms are jealous at this moment.

Notice how they appear. Verse 7, John further describes these living ones. It's interesting, I think, we're not told about their form or shape. In Ezekiel 1:5 we're told that the cherubim had human form. And I think we should probably understand the same here. Overall, I think we should understand these being to resemble human beings, but unlike Ezekiel, each of these four living ones here has only one facial likeness. And notice in each case it's "like the face of". So, don't think lion-face. It's like the face. He's just trying to pull something that we know to help us understand what he's seeing. Now the faces of these three beings are likened to a wild animal, the lion; a domesticated animal, the ox; a bird, a flying eagle; and a man. Let's look at them. First of all, verse 7 says, "The first creature was like a lion". Among the wild animals the lion is the most majestic and noble, the most bold and courageous in its demeanor. I think that's the point of similarity here. I'll come back and pull this together, but keep that in mind. The second creature, we're told in verse 7, is "like a calf". Among the domesticated animals the ox is the strongest and the most tenacious in its service of mankind. Verse 7 goes on to say, "and the third creature had a face like that of a man". Human face is intended likely to picture intelligence, wisdom. And of course, man is the pinnacle of God's creation. "The fourth creature was like a flying eagle", probably intended to picture the swiftest among God's creation. So together, those descriptions imply that these angelic beings are noble, courageous, powerful, wise, and swift in carrying out God's purpose. Verse 8 says, "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings". Now, the six wings may simply imply that they are swift to carry out God's commands. They're not limited in their ability to travel the universe on God's behalf, and certainly that's true. But remember the six wings of the seraphim in Isaiah 6? Only two of them were used for flying. What were the other four used for? For worship. Perhaps it's true with

these creatures as well. Verse 8 says again they “are full of eyes around and within” implying their intelligence, perception, and vigilance.

So, let’s move on then to what they do. Verse 8 says, “and day and night they do not cease to say”. Now as we’ll see in chapter 6, this is not their only duty, but when they’re not carrying out another assignment on God’s behalf, they always come back to unceasing joy and praise of God. That is their unceasing duty and their greatest joy – to bring praise to God. And notice, they continually praise God for three of His attributes. First of all, for His holiness. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God”. Like the seraphim of Isaiah 6, they constantly celebrate the holiness of God. We’ve looks at that word recently. The Hebrew word “holy”, like the Greek word, simply means set apart. God is characterized by separateness. He is separate from everything else in His majesty and greatness, and in His moral purity. Think of it this way. There is an impassible gulf between the person of God and everything else He’s made, in terms of greatness and in terms of purity. The fact that holy is repeated three times here I think emphasizes the greatness of that separation, the greatness of that gulf between God and His creation, and I think it likely also implies the Trinity. Now these angelic beings celebrate God’s holiness, but notice they also celebrate His omnipotence. He is “the Almighty”. Now we’ve already met this, you remember back in Revelation 1:8, “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’”. It’s interesting that God is referred to nine times in Revelation as “Almighty”, but only once in the rest of the New Testament. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, uses this word most often to translate the Hebrew expression “the Lord of Hosts” or “the Lord of Armies”. The focus in this word “the Almighty” is not merely on the fact that there is no limit to God’s power, although that’s true; but rather the focus here is on His unlimited power to rule. His unlimited power to control. Literally the word means “all rule”. Nothing happens outside of God’s all-powerful rule. Now there is a lesson Christians need to learn. Whenever you’re concerned. Whenever you’re frustrated by the news. Whenever you’re thinking “oh no, the world is a runaway train and no-one’s control”, you need to remember this title: The Almighty. The One who is characterized by “all rule”. As God’s wrath against this rebellious world begins to reach its climax in the book of Revelation this name occurs more and more frequently. We’ll see it as this book unfolds. It starts in chapter 11, again in chapter 15, chapter 16, chapter 19, chapter 21. Again and again this name,

The Almighty, shows up to remind us that none of this is out of God's control. It is His perfect rule that is being expressed. God is The Almighty.

They also praise God for His self-existence and eternity. Verse 8 goes on to say, "who was and who is and who is to come". Again, we've met that title before but here they change the order. These angelic beings change the order we saw back in chapter 1. Notice here it's the one "who was". In other words, He continually existed in the past, and I think in light of what we're about to discover, they're saying including at creation, He was. "Who is". He's simply, He is. He's self-existent. He depends on nothing and no one for His existence, and He is unchangeable. He just always is. He always is what He always has been. And He always will be what He always has been. And He's the One "who is to come". As we saw back in chapter 1, this refers to the fact that God is going to come and intervene in human history to bring it to its conclusion. These four living beings. This exalted angelic order around the throne of God. They are eager for God to intervene and bring human history to its conclusion. To end the groaning of the creation and bring about its redemption. God is absolutely holy and has unlimited power, and what that means in context is that He has both the power and the right to intervene in human history and return His creation, which is His and His alone, to its state of righteousness. Which is exactly what He will do.

That brings us to the chief activity before God's throne in verses 9-11. We've seen the startling revelation of God's throne in verses 2 and 3. The majestic setting around God's throne in verses 3-8. In verses 9-10 we see the chief activity before God's throne. The primary activity that surrounds the throne and the person of God is unceasing, perfect worship. In chapters 4 and 5 there are five great hymns of praise. The first two focus on the Father, the next two on the Son, and the final one on both the Father and the Son. With each hymn, the size of the choir grows. The first begins with a quartet of the four living creatures in Revelation 4:8. Then in verse 10 the 24 elders joined, representing all the redeemed people of God. Then the millions of angels add their voices in Revelation 5:11. Finally in Revelation 5:13, every created thing in the universe lifts its voice in praise of God. Praising what about God? Chapter 4 is primarily praising God as Creator as we'll see in a moment. Chapter 5 is primarily praising God as Redeemer.

So, let's see this worship that happens around God's throne. First of all, I want you to notice the worship of the living ones in verse 9, "And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks". Stop there for a moment. Notice they give God glory and honor. Now, to give God glory and honor is not to give God something He doesn't already have. It is simply to acknowledge the glory and honor, the respect and esteem, that He rightly deserves simply by virtue of who He is. And "thanks" here, they give Him thanks, is for all that He provides and does. They give Him glory and honor, that is respect and esteem, and they give Him thanks. And they give it, notice, "to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever". These powerful beings surrounding the throne of God acknowledge God's right to rule. He sits on the throne. And they acknowledge His eternity, "He lives forever and ever". It'll come up again in verse 10. This expression, "Him who lives forever and ever" comes from Daniel 4 and Daniel 12. It's a biblical expression. And they exalt God. This is their worship. But then I want you to see the worship of the 24 elders in verses 10 and 11. Go back to verse 9 and pick up this introductory phrase, "And when", notice that word, "the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks". So, in other words, every time that these angelic beings praise God, so do the 24 elders. All the redeemed people of God. Apparently, these hymns are antiphonal as one group responds to another. Kind of like we have heard sung, "Is He Worthy?" Like that.

Notice how John describes the worship of the redeemed in Heaven. First of all, we will worship in humility and reverence. Verse 10 says, "the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne". Six times in Revelation the elders fall down before either the Father or the Lamb. Six times. Three times the four living creatures that we've just studied join them. And once, the angels join them as well. Prostrating yourself before someone else literally; it pictures your own humility and it pictures your reverence and exalted respect for the person before whom you fall. That's the idea here. There is both humility in that, "I am not worthy" as John the Baptist said, "to loose the sandal from His foot". And reverence in the sense of He is exalted beyond anything that I can imagine. He is my Creator. He is God Almighty.

Our worship is also in dependence and submission. Verse 10 goes on to say, "and they will worship Him who lives forever and ever". The leading Greek lexicon defines this word worship

this way, “to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority”. That’s what’s going on here and that’s what we will do.

We will also worship in gratitude and honor. Verse 10 says, “and they will cast their crowns before the throne”. Now in the rest of the New Testament, you’re familiar with this, we learn that believers will receive crowns as their rewards. Not literal crowns we put on our heads, but rather, probably, what are the rewards we will receive? I think if you look at the New Testament, the rewards we’ll receive are twofold. One, we’ll receive the Lord’s praise. That’s what 1 Corinthians 4 says. When He returns, each man will receive his praise from God. Like in the story Jesus tells, that you are a worthy servant. Welcome home. Just think about that for a moment. Just think about what it will be like to stand before Jesus Christ and hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant”. And the other part of our reward, from everything I see in the New Testament, will be a greater capacity to serve in eternity. Our faithfulness here will be rewarded, remember as our Lord says, with more capacity to serve and honor Him forever. So, the crowns here are not literal pieces of metal or wreathes we put on our heads. They are simply representative of these great rewards that will be ours. And what will we do with them? We will cast them at the Father’s feet. That is to acknowledge that they are undeserved. That they have been received solely as a result of God’s grace. Listen, anything God ever will reward you or me for will never be anything that we have done. As Paul says, it was His grace that worked in me to accomplish His purpose. And the same thing is true for all of us. So, the amazing thing about God is He is so gentle. He is so kind. He is so generous. He is so gracious. That He will give us, and does give us, the power to serve Him. He is the one who accomplishes anything that’s accomplished through us, and when we get to Heaven, He will reward us with His praise and with a greater capacity to serve. And how will we respond? We’ll respond by acknowledging that He alone and His grace alone is the only reason for any of that. We will cast our crowns at His feet.

And crowns imply ruling, right? We’ve already seen that believers are going to rule with Christ. And here, to throw our crowns at the Father’s feet, is to say that our right to rule with Christ is also grace. It’s all of God. So, all of that is pictured together. The first time that Handel’s “Messiah” was performed was in London in the year 1743. King George II was present for its

debut. And when it got to the end of the “Messiah” and the Halleluiah Chorus began, King George stood and he bowed his head. It was to show that God alone through His Son, Jesus Christ, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and earthly kings can only worship Them. His gesture reflects the reality of Heaven. And, by the way, it’s the reason we always stand for the Halleluiah Chorus. We will reflect that attitude in worship around the throne. We will worship God and we will cast our crowns at His feet saying, “anything good in me has all been from You. It’s all grace.”.

And we will worship in adoration and praise. Verse 10, “saying”. Based on what we discover in Revelation, Heaven is filled with a variety of songs. Can I just say? That’s why you, as a Christian, need to learn to sing here. I do not understand a Christian who doesn’t sing to the Lord. We are commanded to sing. It fills our hearts to sing. And you’d better get tuned up because that’s what we are going to be doing forever. There are a variety of songs that celebrate who God is and what He’s done in Christ. And here’s the first. It’s a song that celebrates God as Creator. Because in His creation we see the evidence of His glory and His power. Notice it starts in verse 11 by declaring the reality that He deserves our praise and adoration. “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God”. It’s interesting that the praise of the living ones was about God to others. But the praise of the elders, representing the redeemed, is directed to God personally. Now look at the word “worthy”. That is a word that comes from the culture of the first century. In fact, this will shock you, it’s actually a political word. The Greek word “worthy” was used by the citizens of Rome when the emperor marched through the streets in triumphal procession. And ironically, the Roman emperor Domitian, who was in power when this letter was written, was the first emperor to demand that people address him as “our lord and our god” while he was still living. The emperor cult prior to that had always only acknowledged emperors as gods after their death. But he called for being recognized as lord and god during his life. John here reminds us that these titles are reserved for the one true and living God alone. “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power”. The 24 elders, the redeemed people of God in Heaven, give God glory and honor just like the living ones do, but notice they add “power”. And in light of the rest of the verse, I think they are especially celebrating God’s power in creation. Notice that He alone is responsible for the reality of creation. “For”; here’s the reason God deserves glory, honor, and power, “You created all things”. God created all things by His own

creative act. And, He's responsible for the initiation, the beginning of creation. Notice, it was the product of God's will, "and because of Your will they existed, and were created". God, and God alone, is the cause of creation. Creation came to be because He willed it, and because He did it. Turn back to Psalm 33:6. I love this description of the creation.

By the word of the Lord the Heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

That's the celebration of Heaven toward the Father. The point of this great hymn at the end of Revelation 4 is that God is the Creator. And as the Creator, He has the right to redeem His creation and He has the right to judge it.

So, what are the lessons from this magnificent chapter? It's laying the foundation for chapter 5. Which, Lord willing, we'll look at next time. But what are the lessons we can learn here? It just struck me this week that this chapter ties so amazingly close to Romans 1. Think about this with me. Here's what we learned from this chapter, and it's reflected in Romans 1. First of all, we learned that God's glory is revealed in His creation. Psalm 19:1, "The Heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands". Let me ask you a question. Do you ever stop, look up from your phone, and look at what God our Creator has made? It's so much more impressive than anything you hold in your hand. Whether you take a telescope the size of the Hubble Telescope and you look at the millions of galaxies that can be seen from that telescope, or whether you take an electron microscope and you look at the smallest creations on this planet; everywhere you look you see the glory of God. You see His character. In fact, according to Revelation 4 and Romans 1, the creation is specifically proclaiming or declaring God's deity or His existence. That's what Paul says in Romans 1:20. He says, you look at the things that have been made and you see the invisible things of God, specifically His divine nature. No reasonable, rational person, who doesn't have a moral reason for doing otherwise, can look at what has been made in this universe and say, "that happened". That's not an intelligent

response. That's a moral response; if you take evolution and say it just happened. Because the creation is clear. In fact, look at Romans 1:19. I just want you to see this, "that which is known about God is evident within them". He's talking to them now about people who don't have the Bible. He's talking about pagans, Gentiles, people outside the people of God. They have an evident revelation of God within them. How do we know that? "For God made it evident to them". God made it evident.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

There is not a person on this planet who doesn't understand that there is a God from the created world. God doesn't believe an atheist. God doesn't believe an evolutionist either. Because He has made it evident to every human being. You say, well how do so many intelligent people on our planet end up believing in evolution? Look back at verse 18, "they suppress the truth" because they don't like the implications. Creator implies ownership. It implies responsibility to obey. And they simply don't want that. God's creation is declaring His existence. It's declaring His eternity. Think about it. Here we are on this planet. Clearly there were many generations before us. There are all these galaxies out there and somebody made them and somebody's sustaining them, and that will continue after we're gone. What does that imply about the person who made them? He's eternal. It also implies His power. So, God's glory is revealed in His creation. And that's what those angelic being and the elders around the throne celebrate. God, You are the Creator and everywhere in everything You've made, You've manifested Your glory.

Secondly, because of God's glory revealed in creation, God is worthy of worship. He's worthy. I love that. He deserves it. He deserves your worship. He deserves the worship of every intelligent being in the universe. In fact, in Romans 1:20 it says,

Being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks.

God is worthy of worship, He deserves to be glorified, and they didn't. That's what "give Him honor" means. It means to glorify God. They didn't glorify God.

Number three. God's worthiness for worship demands man's worship. Because God is worthy of worship, because He's created all things, every human being should be worshipping God as Creator. The One who made him or her. The One who sustains us, who gives us life. This is what should be happening. And it doesn't happen. Men suppress the truth about God. They refuse to give Him glory. They refuse to give Him thanks. We're coming up on Thanksgiving. Let me tell you, unbelievers will gather with their family and they will talk with each other about what they're grateful to have, but what they will not do is actively take time to say thank you to God, who gave them all those things. Man should worship, but he doesn't. And that leads us to where this chapter is headed. Man's refusal to give God glory or thanks deserves and will bring God's wrath. That's what this chapter is reminding us of. Remember, it's building. This is a scene in Heaven just before The Great Tribulation begins and before Christ comes and takes the scroll with seven seals, the title deed to the earth, and begins to break its seals, and unleashes judgment on this planet. Before all of that happens, those beings around the throne, the redeemed as well as these living ones, and all of the angels join together in saying, God, you created all things. You deserve to be worshipped. And yet, look. Look at what man has become. And therefore, God will unleash His wrath.

Let me just make this very personal. You were made to worship. You were created by God. He has given you life. He's given you every good thing you have. He sustains your life. So, my question to you is: are you truly a worshipper of the God of Heaven? If not, your refusal or failure to worship Him is accumulating God's just anger against you. And someday, like the world at large, you will experience that outpouring of God's anger. God is incredibly patient, but the day is coming when God will have had enough of rebellion, and He will begin to act. That's the lesson that we see beginning here in Chapter 4. May all of us seek mercy in the Son. I love the way Psalm 2 ends, "Kiss the Son, lest he become angry, and you perish in the way. Blessed are all who find refuge in Him".

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for this incredible display that You allowed John the Apostle to see. Lord, I acknowledge that we are unable to fully grasp all of these realities. That our minds are too feeble to see You in Your glory. And yet Father, I thank You for what You've allowed us to see through the vision You gave John the Apostle. Lord may You be exalted in our thoughts and minds. Forgive us for our puny, small view of You, and replace it, O God, with Your greatness, with Your majesty, with Your holiness, with the fact that You are almighty. And Father, may You dominate our vision. And may everything else grow small and insignificant. I pray that You would cause our hearts to truly worship You. Lord, those of us who know You and who have come to know You through Your Son, may we worship You as the Creator. May we look around us, may we see Your greatness displayed, and may we give You glory as You deserve. Father, I pray for those who may be here who are not worshippers of anything but themselves. Lord, I pray that tonight, You would help them see that that is such an incredible affront to You. It is rebellion. And may tonight, they come to You for Your mercy in Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.