

## John's Vision of Heaven

Revelation 4

November 5, 2023, Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Last week, I started the sermon by praying for myself. I appreciate you guys and your grace and letting me do that. This morning I want to begin the sermon by praying for you. Is that okay? All right, whether it's okay or not, we're about to do it. Okay. All right. So let me let me have a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are talking about heaven today. We're talking about a place that we all need to go to, and yet I do fear anytime we talk about this, there are some who may not be headed toward heaven. And so I pray as we talk about this, You would open eyes to the state of their own hearts, they would examine their own souls, to see if they're in Christ, and Lord, You would draw sinners to the Savior. The reason we're praying for this Lord is I don't want anybody in this room not to go there. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this morning, we are continuing a sermon series we started last week on the return of Christ. The reason we're doing that is because in the last series on the government, I had several people ask me the question, "Is there any hope for the world today?" When they hear about politics and the state of things, they get really discouraged. And they wonder, is there anything to look forward to? The answer is there is when Jesus returns. Will it get better? Yes, it will when Christ comes back. Here's the thing, friends, I don't know the future, you don't know the future, but God does. Amen? And God says, in the future, Jesus is not going to leave this world in this crazy messed up place it is right now. He's going to come back to fix it. And we're talking about that in the book of Revelation.

So if you would, please turn there with me in your Bibles. That's where we're looking today, in the book of Revelation, a very interesting book in the Bible to say the least. Anytime you read it, it really makes you do a lot of thinking. And I want to let you know, as you're turning there, the book doesn't start out with the return of Christ. And so we're not looking at that just yet. Instead, we're looking at several visions God gave to the Apostle John.

One of them is found in chapter four, verse one. Here's the vision we're looking at today. It says this, it says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a door, standing open." Now, if you notice, just by reading that, you can tell John begins the vision by talking about a door. Earlier in chapter one, he saw a vision of Christ; now he sees a door. Where's it going? It's going to heaven. You want to find a door to heaven? Here it is. You want to see what it's like to walk into the presence of God. John did that in this vision.

I told you last time, the word "heaven," it's a very important one in the book of Revelation. It's used over 50 times to describe several things in fact. For example, it's used in chapter three verse 12, to refer to the dwelling place of God. The word heaven is used in chapter 20 verse nine to refer to the sky or the

heavens above, as we would say. It's used in chapter 21 verse one to refer to the universe or the galaxies, the heavens above that we would call it. But here in chapter four, it's talking about the first one. In this vision, John doesn't go into the sky or the galaxy. He goes into the dwelling place of God.

And if you notice, as Adam read that earlier, what are people doing when he gets there? They're worshipping. How do they respond when they come into the presence of God? They bow. Verse eight says, the creatures in heaven are saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty." And then in verse 10, it says the people there fall at his feet, and say, "Worthy, worthy, worthy are You."

In other words, when John goes to heaven, the people aren't partying, and they're not celebrating and rejoicing first. The Bible does say that happens in heaven. Absolutely. Of course it does. But first and foremost, they give Him praise. That's the number one priority of heaven. And the reason I mentioned this is because the subject of worship has really fallen on hard times recently. People have created a new way of worshipping that doesn't make God the main priority; it makes man the main priority. And that's a really twisted way to see heaven. It doesn't seek to give Him glory as much as it wants to make people feel comfortable. And the idea is that the most important thing a church can do is reach people. So whatever it takes to reach them, we do it. If they want shorter sermons, we give them shorter sermons. If they want less doctrine, we give them less doctrine. If they want brighter lights and rock and roll and a fog machine, they can have all that. Because we send the message to people that it's all about them. Now, as you look back in your Bibles, tell me where do you see that in heaven? You don't. And where does it say that when we worship, we need to make people the number one priority. It doesn't do that. That's not the focus here. The focus in heaven is on bowing. You want to go into the presence of God? You better get ready to bow.

In fact, this word "bow" I told you last time or "fall down" in verse 10, it doesn't mean bending the knee, it means to bow like this with your hands out and your face to the floor and your body on the ground saying, "I'm nothing. Christ is everything. He must become greater; I must become less. He must be exalted; I must be humbled. He must be lifted up; I must be forgotten." That's how you worship. Friends, have you bowed lately, in your heart? Have you gone down before Him like this? That's how you get into heaven. There is a door into heaven; it is a low door. You don't get in there walking tall.

As you're reading this, if you're wondering, why did God give John this vision at this point in Revelation? The answer is because he needed it. John is about to see some awful things happen in this book. Starting in chapter six, the Lord is going to begin a period of history known as the Great Tribulation where He will judge the earth in a way that has never been seen before in human history. It will make you just shudder in horror. And as He's about to do that, the Lord shows him here that the reason He can act this way is because He is God, there is no other, and He is on the throne. And as such, He is worthy of worship. I hope you believe He's worthy today. If you don't believe He's worthy, I think you will after studying this passage if you have your eyes open and your ears attentive to what it says. His worth and glory is seen in every syllable in this chapter.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning with five characteristics of Heaven's worship. And so if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. We are all going to have low hearts before the throne after reading this. Five characteristics of Heavens worship.

The first one is a high view of God. This is where the worship of Heaven begins with God high and exalted and lifted on the throne. You don't even get past the first couple of verses without seeing this. If you look in verse two. It says that after the Lord told John to come through this door, "Immediately, I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne."

Now just stop there. What's the first thing you see in heaven, that John sees? The throne right? Right there in the verse. Who is seated on it? The Lord Jesus. Which means when John entered heaven, he's not impressed with the lights and the music and the fog machine, he's struck by God. He couldn't even go into heaven for more than a few instants without being blown away by this.

And when it says that he saw a throne there, a throne is a symbol of authority in the ancient world. We still have thrones today in some places, but some governments don't have this kind of emblem, but anytime a ruler would come to power in the first century, the first thing he would do is sit on a throne to show everyone that he was in charge and calling the shots. John says, that's what I saw in heaven. God is in charge. God is calling the shots. Man is not in charge. He has nothing there. The angels are not in charge. So are they. God is.

Verse two also says that the throne was standing. That means that it's fixed and secure and it doesn't move. It's like bolted to the ground. The world does this; the throne does this. It says God is sitting on it. It means it's occupied. It's not a vacant throne. There is no deism here. There's no god who winds up the universe and just lets it go. That is not what this is saying. He is actively ruling on the throne. And after talking about this, John is going to begin in this chapter to describe the Lord Himself.

And I have to be, this is where you got to be careful. I trembled all week studying this. You have to watch your words carefully. No man can describe the presence of God. All human language is inadequate to do that. Anytime you try, you come to a point where you put your hand on your mouth, and you have to be silent. And this is how John approaches it because you're going to see the word "like" used in here to say that the Lord is not all of these things, but He's *like* them. John is making a comparison. It's the best he can do.

And he says here that He who was sitting was like a jasper stone. That's a jewel that reflects light. I don't know if you've seen a jasper stone before, but it's like a gem that's able to take the rays of the sun and magnify it. So when John looked at God, what he's seeing is the glory of God going everywhere and being magnified all over the place. Everywhere he turns, there's more glory coming off of the throne. The verse says he was like a sardius in appearance. I think some of your translations say Carnelian, is

that right? Carnelian. It's a gem that is similar to Jasper except whereas Jasper reflects the light, sardius keeps it in. So when John looks at God, not only is the glory going forth, the glory is coming in. He receives glory, He spreads glory. There's just Glory, glory, glory. Next, it tells us that there was a rainbow around the throne, reminding you of God's faithfulness and the covenant He made with Noah to show you that his promises surround the throne and envelop it. He is a faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations. And it says here that He was like an emerald, which is a jewel that denotes life and power because it's green.

But the point is that when John came to heaven, before he sings any songs and listens to music and does other things that we would equate to worshiping, He looks at God. The Lord captures his attention. He didn't go get a cup of coffee. He didn't grab a bagel. He didn't visit with his friends the way a lot of us do. Nothing wrong with that, that's fine, but he goes to heaven. He drops what he's doing, and he stares because he can't help it. Everybody looks at God in Heaven.

Backing up a little bit here, this is very important when you consider where John was that at the time of his vision. Revelation 1:9 says that he was on the island of Patmos. And that doesn't mean that he was on a vacation pad. Patmos was a prison island that the Romans sent convicts to. It was a stretch of land that was about 10 miles long and six miles wide located in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor that they would house criminals in because there's no way to escape. Once you're on the island, you're stuck on the island. John did not write the book of Revelation from the Holiday Inn. He wrote it from the worst place imaginable, as an old man. According to church history, he was probably about 90 at the time, which would have been very discouraging because he would have been wondering what anybody would wonder at this time. "Where are you God? Why is this happening?" Have you ever wondered that before? You think if you're 90 years old and you're in jail, you'd be asking that question? So the Lord shows in this vision to tell him, "I'm on the throne. I was on the throne before you went to jail. I'm on the throne when you're in jail. I'll be on the throne when you get out." People need to hear that today, don't they? You need to be reminded God is on the throne. Just like John, we all look at the world and say, "Where are you, God? What's happening? Why is it so bad?" Look, how many thrones do you see in verse two? You see one throne. How many people are sitting on it. One. It's enough; He is enough. There will be other thrones, as I'll show you in a moment in verse four, but they're not like this. This is one of a kind. God is the absolute, undeniable, unquestioned sovereign ruler of the universe. Amen? There is no one who comes close.

And yet, when you look at this passage, and you think about it, it makes you wonder, do people still believe that today? Do people in church still acknowledge this? Because it's oftentimes not brought up. We're so busy doing other things to reach people sometimes we forget to tell them that God is sovereign. Listen, friends, when you go to church, you don't come for anything else, but to do business with God. You want to hear from His word, you want to read the Scriptures, you want to be told that the Lord reigns. You don't want to have to guess if He's sovereign. You want to know He's sovereign because it says it right here. The Bible tells us "Our God is in heaven. He does what he pleases." All the

inhabitants of the earth are nothing to him. They're dust on a scale. He does according to His will. No one can say to him, "What have you done?" God is the captain of His ship, the pilot of His own destiny, the leader of His own vessel. He's the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, Christ is, His will has never failed, His word never fails. His counsel stands forever. If He said it, He will do it. If He promised, He will be faithful. And this is why. When you look at this God, you do not have to be afraid about the future. He is in control. He was in control yesterday, today and tomorrow. Here, there, and everywhere. I think so many people struggle with this in their spiritual lives because they don't always get that message from a pulpit. They hear jokes, but they don't hear that. But when you suffer, what's a joke going to do for you? You need to know God is on the throne. And the throne is standing doesn't move.

There's a story told at the time Martin Luther was really discouraged in the ministry because things were not going well. And so his wife, he was he was going around the house all day being droopy, and so his wife dressed all in black one day as if she was in mourning. And Martin Luther said to her, "Honey, what's wrong, who died?" And she said, "According to Dr. Luthor, God did. And I'll take this off when you snap out of it." And see friends, she's right. God did not die. When the Coronavirus happened, He didn't leave. When North America went nuts, He's still sovereign. And this passage reminds us of that.

It brings you to another characteristic of Heaven's worship here. And that is that it's led by elders. And that may sound strange to you, but I want to show you where this comes from in the text because the second characteristic here is that it's elder led. You say, "Are their elders in heaven, Pastor Jeremy?" Well, there better be. If there's not, I got three of them in here that have a lot of explaining to do. There are elders in heaven. In Heaven, God reigns and rules and calls the shots but, in His wisdom, this passage shows you He's decided to delegate some authority. He's not sharing, He's delegating some of it to people that are called elders.

If you look in your Bibles, verse four, says around the throne of God, were 24 thrones, and who are sitting on them? Well elders, *presbyteros* in Greek. It's where you get the word Presbyterian from. It means around the throne of God, there are lesser thrones. They're not up here with God. Nothing's up here with God. They're down here at His feet. To show that God has chosen to give some of the responsibility of leading the people of heaven to these men. If that sounds strange to you, and it did sound strange to me when I was studying it, but it really shouldn't because it's something you do see all throughout Scripture. In every major stage of biblical history, there are elders there. If you want to write some of these verses down, Numbers, 11:16, says, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Gather for me 70 men from the elders of Israel.'" Because they had elders in Israel. It says that because they follow that system of government there. Titus 1:5, tells Titus, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders there." They did the same thing in the church. This is what they do in heaven. If you want to know what kind of leaders God wants the saints to have, this is an example of that.

Verse four says the elders were clothed in white garments. That refers to the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to them. It's not like these men are saved one way while everyone else is saved another; it's all the same way. It's through Jesus. You get into heaven and you're an elder, it's through Jesus. You get into heaven and you're not an elder, it's the same way. It says they have golden crowns on their heads, refers to the reward they've been given for their faithful service to the Lord. This is not a crown of salvation, even though that's mentioned elsewhere. It's a crown the Lord gifts to those who patiently follow Him in the ministry. The verse says there's 24 of them. If you want to know why there's different ideas about that. The one I found I thought was the best one is that they represent the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. When you put the numbers 12 and 12 together, it comes to 24. And these two groups could be representative of the people of God in the Old Testament, and the people in the New to show that as they sit near the throne, they're reminding the Lord of the covenant He made with these two entities. But to be honest, there is some mystery here, the text doesn't go into all of that.

And when you read a passage like this, when you might be saying yourself, well, that's interesting, but what does it have to do with us? Well, a couple of things. I mean, one is, if there's elders in heaven, I think it makes sense, there should be elders on Earth. Or at least it shows that God approves of this model of leadership. When you start a church, you're not supposed to throw a bunch of people together and call it a congregation, it should have seasoned men who have been given the task of guiding them. I think it also demonstrates that the church should be led by men. That's what we see here as well that the term elder in English it's does not have a gender to it, but in the Greek, it's in the masculine. These are not ladies here. It doesn't mean that ladies don't go to heaven. Of course they do. And it doesn't mean that women have no part to play in that realm; they do. It's just not in this one. Or not in this area. It also demonstrates here that there should be believers leading the church, not lost people. You shouldn't have to say that, but nowadays, you need to. These men are clothed in white garments. They're wearing a crown of faithfulness. They're saved. And I could go on and on about this. There are several things we could say. But for the sake of time, let me just move on to this next point here.

Another characteristic of Heaven's worship. It has a high view of God. You see that it's led by elders. It's also serious. It's very, very, very serious. When you read the next part, or even the rest of this, you think some of the churches that are so lighthearted and silly today, this kind of thing would stun them. Notice the tone of heaven. Verse five says, "Out of the throne came flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder." Did you pick up on the tone? The tone is sobering because what it says here is that out of God's presence in heaven comes a lightning storm. That's what these images are intended to remind you of. We don't have lightning storms in this part of British Columbia very much, but I've been told in the prairies of Alberta, they do. And if you've ever sat through one of those before, you'll know this is what it's like. Lightning, thunder, sounds, noise, banging, crashing, pounding, roaring, clanging rumbling so much, you can't even think. It's too loud to think. John says, "That's what I see in heaven."

By the way, this happens a lot in the book of Revelation. It is a very loud book. I'm gonna give you some of these passages. In Revelation 8:5 it says that after the seventh seal is broken, the angel took the



sensor and filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth and there followed peals of thunder, sounds and flashes of lightning. Then in Revelation 11:19 when the seventh trumpet is sounded, it says that in 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. See that again. Then in chapter 16:18, when the Lord releases the seventh bowl of judgment, it says again, there were flashes of lightning, sounds and peals of thunder. And there was a great earthquake such as there has not been since man came to be upon the earth. You see the pattern in this book. There are storms everywhere. The whole thing is one big tempest because God is mad. The reason it's happening in the book of Revelation is because God is angry, and He's about to judge the earth. That's what this scene in Revelation 4 is. It's a foretaste of that. The Lord reveals it to John, in the beginning of the book to tell you judgment is coming, and the world had better get ready.

The verse also says here that we're looking at, in Revelation chapter four verse five, that there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And that's a very hard phrase to interpret. But the word Spirit is capitalized in your Bible, so it could be taken, many translators take it as a reference to the Holy Spirit. His name is pluralized here because those seven lamps are not lamps in the traditional sense. They're like seven lamps sitting on a lampstand. One lampstand, seven lamps, seven-fold ministry of the Spirit is the way many people take this. It doesn't answer every question, but if that is what this is referring to, then it points you back to the fact that God is angry. And this is how angry He is, even the spirit, our great comforter is engulfed in flames.

It makes you pause for a moment and say that's not a very comfortable picture of God, is it? It doesn't sound very friendly. One commentator said you know what's missing from this picture? Sunshine. As John is describing heaven, there's lightning there and there's thunder, and later on, you're going to see angels. But there's nothing to really brighten up the place and make it happy. God is not happy here; He's full of rage. As He looks out on the earth, and the Lord sees our sin, it makes Him mad. He sees that right is wrong on this earth; wrong as right. The guilty are rewarded; the innocent are punished. Romans chapter one is being played out right before our eyes. The depravity of man is being unleashed on the earth. And in this book, God is saying, "Enough. I can't take it anymore. You've ignored my law. You have despised My commandments. You have rejected My Son. You've mocked My church. You've scorned My gospel, and I'm here to tell you It's over." The Earth has had his chance and blown it, and now it's going to feel the blast of His indignation.

Do you know, a day like that is coming? It's called Judgment Day. It's a time when the Lord is going to separate the Earth into two categories, the saved and the lost to either save them or judge them. Now the day is not just a calendar day, it's like a series of days or an era that stretches out through the book of Revelation until they culminate in the Great White Throne Judgment in the end. When it says, in the judgment, God will open the books. And for unbelievers, He will go through every sin they've committed, no matter what it is big or small, put them on a scale, evaluate them and bring the punishment they deserve. And the point in this chapter is that this is a preparation of it. It's a prelude. It's

like when you go to a play, and there's an orchestra playing, getting you ready for the play, the music reminds you the plays about to begin that is what's happening here. As the thunder rolls out from the throne, and the lightning flashes, it's reminding the earth it won't be long now.

I know a lot of people today say it would be so great to go to heaven and stand in the presence of God, and I think it would be. But this is terrifying. It's not what you think. You want to go into the presence of God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when you do, it will be a very serious sobering day. It will be a happy day, but very serious.

Brings you to another characteristic of heaven's worship, and that is that it is transcendent. And that's a fancy word that comes from a Latin word that means "beyond." This is what God is like in heaven. He's beyond us. He is up here, and we are down here. Even when you go into heaven, He will still be that way.

If you look in verse six, it says, "And before the throne, there was something like a sea of glass." And what's that about? Why is there a sea of glass around the throne? Well, the meaning is that this sea functions like a trench to demonstrate that you can approach the throne of God but only to a point. And you can come into His presence, but just to a degree. There's like a moat almost, made out of crystal beautiful sparkling all the way around it. It says that in the centre and around the throne, there were four living creatures. They're four beings that are described in other passages as angels that stay in the presence of God to serve as like guardians there. It's their job to make sure nobody approaches Him without going through them first. The way it works, the way the image is portrayed here in chapter four, is that there is John, there is the sea, and there is the angels next to the throne. There are the elders, there's the trench, and there's the dwelling place of the Almighty with the four living beings.

The text says they are full of eyes in front and behind to show they can see in every direction. They're always looking, always watching. The next verse says the first is like a lion. See the word "like"? It's not saying it is a lion. It's like a lion, meaning strong and dominant. The second is like a calf, meaning selfless and sacrificial. And the third is like a man meaning smart and reasonable. And the fourth is like an eagle because it's swift to do God's will. This is all another analogy. And to add to that, verse eight says they have six wings. Now the word like is not used there, so they have six wings. John doesn't give that much description, but other authors do. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah six says that with those six wings, with two of them they cover their face, with two they cover their feet, and with two they fly. Because they can't look into the face of God; they knew there's no way for them to stare and not be consumed by His glory. So they're going around the throne like this. And as they do, verse eight says they do not cease to say day and night, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come."

If you're wondering, what do the angels think about God in Heaven, this is what they think. He's holy. The angels in heaven, or not crying out "love, love, love" when they look at God, or when they are next



to God. They're not saying "mercy, mercy, mercy," even though God is those things. They're calling Him holy; it's the one attribute that stands out above anything else.

This phrase is referred to in theologians as the *trisagion*, or the tri-holiness of God. Because in Hebrew, they didn't have a word for holier or holiest. There's just no way in the Hebrew language to express that. So what they do is they would repeat things, say multiple times to give the idea. So when the angels are saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy," they're not stuttering. They're not slipping up on their words. They're telling you there's nothing in the universe as holy or sinless or blameless as the Lord Almighty. In their minds, this puts God even on a whole other level than them. The angels are sinless. They've never sinned, and yet God is even more that way than them. And when you think about the holiness of God, and the transcendence, the fact that He's beyond us, this really flushes that out doesn't it? We're not holy, you're not holy. If you remember back to the time when you were first saved, you thought you were a pretty good person before that, didn't you? And then you met God, and you studied His word, and you learned the commandments, you got your mind around His holiness, and you realized you are nothing but a rotten, stinking sinner, who needed His grace. And that made you realize there's a separation there.

Some of you have watched The Way of The Master videos where they approach someone on the street, and they asked him, "Do you think you're a good person?" And if they say yes, the way The Way of The Master guys will walk him through the 10 commandments, and say, "Well, have you ever told a lie? What does that make you? It makes you a liar. Have you ever stolen something irrespective of its value? What does that make you? It makes you a thief." On and on and on down the line so by your own admission, you're a lying thief. Where should God send you? He should send you to hell. Why? Because you're not like Him. You may be nice, you're not like Him. You may be a good person according to the world's standards; you are not holy, there is no one righteous, not even one, which is why Christ came to save us.

But John, I'll tell you more about that in a moment, but John's point here is that even with the salvation we receive, there is still a gap. God is still higher than you. You can be united to Christ. You can be one with the Father in many ways, in a sense, but there's still a sea of glass there. There's still angels. And it reminds you of the fact that He is this much greater. And that should always guide the way you worship. When you worship God, you are not worshipping a peer. He's not equal to you. You're not like this. It's like this. It will always be like this. For all eternity, it will be like this. You can come to the throne of God confidently through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot go carelessly. You can be bold; you cannot be brazen. There's always a spirit of reverence.

If there's anything lacking among Christians today, it is a spirit of reverence to the Lord. Amen? You go some places like you're entering church into a rock concert. It's about as respectful as that. You always come into the presence of God humble. In fact, the more you grow in Christ, the more reverent you are. And the closer you get to heaven, the more low you get in your own eyes. The road to Heaven, in some ways is almost like a road downward in your own estimation of yourself. You guys know what this is

like. The more you grow as a Christian, it's like the less you sin in some ways, but the sins you commit, they hurt you more, don't they? This is all a reflection of that.

It brings you to one more characteristic of Heaven's worship. Let me give you these other ones again, just for a reminder. The first one is a high view of God. And then secondly, it's elder lead and it's serious. And then Heaven's worship is also transcendent. When John comes into the presence of God, the angels hide their faces, the angels. And if they do that, how much more should we? I told you at the beginning of the service when you worship you have to bow. Do you see why? The angels do it, the elders do it, the saints who are going to come later in the book of Revelation, they're going to do it, you have to do it too.

And it brings you to one more characteristic of all this, and that is that it is humbling. A fifth characteristic, the last one, of Heaven's worship is that it's humbling because this is how the scene in heaven here draws to a close. It begins with everyone going to their knees, at least the elders anyway.

Verse nine says, as John looks at the throne, and he sees the elders and the living creatures, the angels do something humbling because it says that they give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne. And as they do that, it sets off a chain reaction. It's like a rippling effect that causes everyone to copy their example. It's like a domino falling down, and the next one falls down, and the next one falls down, the next one falls down. It says that the 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne; they go over like cut timber. And they worship Him forever and ever. And they start to speak, and they say the word, "worthy."

And I can't go any further without explaining that word. It's such a colorful one in Greek. The word "worthy" it was used in the first century to describe the profession of procession of a Roman general after he won a battle. And the historians tell us that when that would happen, the city of Rome would throw a parade whereby all the captured people of the battle would march down the streets of the city. And then the soldiers of the army would come with their banners and flags. And then the Roman General himself would come at the back of the line in a chariot stuffed with spoils, with gold, and money, and silver, and he would ride up to the steps of the Capitol where Cesar was, and he would get out and lay it at his feet and say, "Worthy. You are worthy Caesar. All of this goes back to you."

John says that's what is going on in heaven. As the elders bowed down before the Lord, they lay their crowns down at his feet; God gave them the crown, they're giving it back. And they're saying, "Worthy are you our Lord and our God to receive glory and honour and power, for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed." How many things did God create here? All things. By whose will do they exist? It's His will. It's not nature's will. They didn't evolve. The Lord ordained it through an act of His sovereignty which means when you look left, you can know God created that; when you look right God created that. Look up, He created it; look down, He created it. Mountains, seas, and the valleys. The land, the plain and the hills, stars, planets and galaxies, Sun, moon, plants, animals, even your very soul.

All of that falls under His domain, and that is why He is worthy. He spoke and He hurled it into existence. He said the word and it came to pass. And the point here is that there's only one way for the people in heaven to respond. And that is to do this. And bow.

One pastor said, "When you read this passage, it reminds you that you don't strut into the presence of God like a peacock; you crawl like a worm." What is there to strut about? What are you gonna boast in? You didn't create anything, so the only thing you can do is to be low. When you go to heaven, friends, it will be the lowest day of your life in this sense. In another sense, it'll be the most encouraging day of your life; you'll be with the Lord. But you will never be humbler than you will be at that moment. Do you want to know God today? You can. Do you want to go to heaven? The door is open for you. But you go like this. You say, "You are the potter; I am the clay. You are the Master; I am the slave. You are the Creator; I'm a creature." That's the secret to worship. You maintain an ongoing daily spirit of brokenness in your heart toward God. Remember, worship, we said this in the beginning, worship is not about you, it's about Him. And when you worship, you understand God is not the number one priority while you're number two, your last. You're at the back of the line, and you go further and further back, the closer you go to Him. If there's any part of the Bible that shows us this, it is this one, the whole chapter just oozes with the greatness of God and the nothingness of man.

And that may be convicting for some of you because you may have never seen that before. I don't know where everyone's at today, but some of you may come from a church, where the glory of God has been nowhere on your radar. You think it's all about you. When you come to church, you've always believed you're the star of the show when you get here. But when you read this, you realize it's wrong. You've been wrong all these years. What do you do? You come to Christ. If you're lost, you go to Jesus. Remember, we said in the very beginning of this vision, John saw a door to heaven. Jesus says, "I'm the door." That's how you get into heaven. The Bible says He came to call sinners, even the proud ones. He's the Son of God who came into this world 2,000 years ago, in the fullness of time to be born of a virgin, live a holy life under the law. You couldn't be holy; He was. And with that perfect life, He went to the cross and died, so you could go to heaven through Him. At the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished." Which means there's nothing more to pay; whatever sin it is, Jesus took care of it. Abortion, He took care of it. Adultery, He took care of it. Lies, He took care of it. Divorce, He took care of it. Murder, He took care of it. He even took care of your foolish pride. It's not a special sin. It's not in its own category. It was nailed to the cross for those who believe. You can be forgiven if you believe. Would you do that today? You have every reason to.

Look, what you're seeing in Revelation four, this is not for the special Christians, and everyone else doesn't get it. This is for anyone who believes. You can come into His presence today. And I want you to do that this morning. I don't want anyone in this room to miss out on this. You can see heaven right here in your Bibles. A day will come when you can see it with your eyes. Don't you want to do that? You want to stay down here? The opportunity is there. Just come to Christ. Take the world; give me Jesus, amen?

Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank You Lord for this vision that we've seen. And I do pray for those who are here this morning those who are lost. Maybe they have never seen Your glory this way. Would You convict their hearts and break them? Lord, I don't pray that with any lack of tenderness. I do know it is convicting to read things like this and think about them. But Lord, I pray that for Your own mercy to save them, so that they can go to heaven.

Lord, it is a very serious thing we've talked about this morning, but it is a beautiful thing to think of being in Your presence. Where else do we want to be? Father, thank You for this vision. There's still so many questions we have. And there's so many things that we're wondering about, but this is a taste. Thank You for the taste.

And I pray for those who are saved and given their lives to You, Lord, that they would be encouraged. I know they look at this world, and it seems so discouraging at times, and it's so broken. It's just so evil. So there's times when we need to take our eyes off of this world and put them on eternity. And You've allowed us to do that this morning. May we go from this place changed? And may Christ be exalted in our hearts because of this.

As we take the Lord's Supper, may we remember what our Saviour has done, the Lord Jesus Christ, to make a way for us to be with You. Thank You for Him. Thank You that He is enough. You are enough on the throne. And the Son of God is enough to save sinners. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.