



gracefellowship

Revelation
February 3, 2019
The Throne of God

:: Revelation 4

Opening Illustration: Ask a volunteer to join me on stage. Show them a picture that only they can see and ask them to describe it to the audience. Use a picture of Orion Nebula.

Following the explanation, ask the audience if they think they have a good idea of what our volunteer has described in their minds. Next show them a picture of the Orion Nebula on the screens.

Throughout the remaining chapters of Revelation John is going to do his best to describe for his audience what he has seen. The idea of being able to fully convey what heaven is like and what things will be like in the future is laughable. John does his best to describe what he is shown by God, and we will do our best to explain what he relays to us.

:: Revelation 4:1-6

1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

John is invited to see God's throne room. Coming off the heels of the letters to the churches, Jesus next wants to anchor John and us, as his audience, to what is central for the rest of the book- the power, presence and worship of God.

In Jesus' invitation to John to visit heaven, He says "I will show you what MUST take place after this." Seeing heaven and the glory of God helps us understand what must soon take place on earth. God wants us to be with Him forever in the splendor and majesty of His perfection. But the results of sin must first be dealt with. In order for God's people to fully enjoy the eternal presence of God, sin, and all that has been broken by it, must be removed and restored. The things that will take place throughout the remainder of the book MUST happen in order for us to once again enjoy perfect fellowship with God as He originally intended.

We also need to be shown the throne of God at this point in the book to anchor

us in the fact that all that will take place on earth as the end draws near is under the authority and sovereign will of God.

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

John is given permission to enter God's throne room and notice how He describes the scene:

Rather than trying to name God or describe human characteristics related to God, John simply describes the splendor and brilliance of the One on the throne.

John takes some of the same thoughts from earlier books of the Bible as he describes what he sees. Here is what we find elsewhere about God's throne:

:: 1 Timothy 6:15-16

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

However, on limited, special occasions God does allow people to get a glimpse of His dwelling place.

:: Ezekiel 1:25-28

25 Then there came a voice from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings.

26 Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man.

27 I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.

28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

:: Exodus 24:9-11

9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up

10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky.

11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

John not only sees God on His throne, he sees worshipers around the throne.

4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

Revelation, more so than any book in the Bible gives us a picture of what true worship looks like.

True worship is God-centered!

There are many things that fight for our allegiance and devotion. We can make idols out of anything and we can turn anything into an object of worship. But true worship is God-centered. John tells us about the beings around God's throne who worship Him day and night for eternity.

Many people debate about the identity of the 24 elders-

Are they the twelve tribes of Israel from the OT and the 12 disciples from the NT?

Are they representative of people from the Old and New Covenant having a place of worship at the throne?

Are they a higher form or angelic being?

The honest truth is...we don't know! John doesn't tell us the specifics. I tend to lean to the idea they are angelic beings because of the role they play in the book and seem to have played in eternity past.

What we do know for sure is that from the throne John heard something associated with the presence of God. In verse 5 he says, "From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder." These sounds are often associated with the presence of God in the Old Testament. They will also come into play more through the book of Revelation as God pours out His judgment on the earth. Following each set of judgments- seals, trumpets and bowls- John describes hearing and seeing thunder and lighting. This lets us know that God is faithfully executing the proper judgments against sin and that He is right to do so as the ruler over all creation.

There are another order of angelic beings around God's throne- John describes them as creatures!

:: Revelation 6:6-8

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings.

Again, we are not fully told what to make of these angelic beings, but we have seen them before in Scripture in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel primarily. They are thought to represent all of God's creation, they stand closest to His throne, they have some role in executing the judgment of God and they lead in the worship of God around the throne. In fact, because of their proximity to God, worship is the essential aspect of what they are created for. The closer we get to God the more we are drawn to worship Him! Look at how John describes the worship of heaven around God's throne:

:: Revelation 6:8-11

Day and night they never stop saying: “ ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.”

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

When the living creatures worship, it causes the elders to prostrate themselves before God, lay their crowns at His feet and worship as well! The elders have thrones and gold crowns, symbols of ruling, but their reign with God is predicated upon their worship of God.

When God is held high in worship by the living creatures the elders can't help but to worship Him as a response.

Notice what John says is happening constantly around the throne of God:

“Day and night they never stop saying...”

“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks...”

This is non-stop worship! And there is a powerful truth here behind the way these angels worship God:

Worship inspires worship!

This is why our gathering today is so significant! Corporate worship is important because as you worship in a God-centered way it inspires others to do so as well. Ask yourself this question today: How is my worship helping someone else worship?

Not only is corporate worship at church important, leading worship of God in your home is important! Parents, it's important to let your kids see you worship God in your homes. It's important to read the Word of God together, to pray together,

and to sing praises to God together. What we model in worship in our homes eventually works its way into the local church.

When we worship God in fullness in our churches and in our homes that should also inspire our community to worship. The worship of God changes us and as we are changed we can't help but to allow the work of God in our lives to work itself out in our neighborhoods and throughout our community.

I love Louie Giglio's definition of worship: **"Worship is our response to God, both privately and corporately, for who He is and for what He has done."**
-Louie Giglio

As you learn to worship God you will find other gods in your life diminishing. The closer we get to God the more fully we understand His glory and worth. Everything John sees in the throne room of God and relays to us is spectacular- but nothing should be elevated above God Himself.

:: Psalm 89:7

6 For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings?

7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him.

8 Who is like you, LORD God Almighty? You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

Closing: **Three things to evaluate this week:**

1. What things in your life do you need to hold up before the throne of God and reevaluate it's worth in your life? What are worshipping that is an idol and needs to be replaced with the worship of the only One who is worthy to receive worship above all things.

2. What about your worship is inspiring others to worship?

3. How is God changing you through your personal worship that spills over into our corporate worship?