

# “When Heaven Worships”

Revelation 4:1-11

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## Introduction

My name is Josh Wood and I'm the Campus Pastor at our Central Nassau Campus. It is a joy and an honor to be here with you today and I appreciate the confidence that Pastor Zach has placed in me to trust me with bringing the Word this morning. Please be in prayer for him this week and all of those who are traveling down to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Orlando.

Worship. In its plainest sense, worship is how we communicate value. And so a simple way of understanding worship is that it is how we communicate how we value God. We can do this through many different ways (singing, prayer, teaching, giving, serving, and many other ways). Today we're going to take a look at an incredible passage. In this passage, we get a sneak peek into what may be the greatest worship service of all time! And here is the kicker, if you are a believer in Jesus, you'll be there! Open your Bible's to Revelation Chapter 4.

## Key Verse – Revelation 4:1-2

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” **2** At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

Let me just stop right here for a second and say something real: **eternity is closer than you think.** A lot of us treat it like it's some far-off thing way out in the future, but it's not. It's literally one breath away. One heartbeat. In the twinkling of an eye, we can step into it. Deep down, many of us feel like we're living in the last days. And if we are, the **return of Jesus for His Church could happen at any moment.**

Eternity isn't just close because of how fragile life is. It's close because we are clearly living in the last days. After thousands of years, Israel became a country in 1948. The world continues to move closer and closer to resembling what is seen throughout this book of Revelation.

**Daniel prophesied it:** “In the last days, knowledge shall increase, and men shall rush to and fro” (Daniel 12:4). That's us. There's this intensity in the air—like something big is about to break.

**We believe it's the glorious return of Jesus, bursting through the skies.** And Revelation 4:1? That's a picture of the Rapture—the moment Jesus comes for His Church. In the Greek, the key idea is being “caught up” suddenly — *harpazo* — the same word Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when he describes the remnant of believers who are still alive in the last days will be “caught up” and meet the Lord in the air.

To better understand the timeline we're looking at here, look at the outline Jesus gave John back in Revelation 1:19: “Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that

are to take place after this.” Chapter 1 was the glorified Christ. Chapters 2 and 3 cover the Church Age—“the things which are”—and the word “church” shows up 19 times. But starting in chapter 4, we shift to “the things which shall be hereafter”—after the Church Age. “After this” literally means “after these things.” John hears a trumpet voice, sees an open door, and gets the call: “Come up hither.” He’s caught up in the Spirit. **This is symbolic of the Rapture of the Church.**

The Lord calls the Church up because He’s about to pour out His wrath on the earth during the Great Tribulation. God won’t pour His wrath on His own kids. He might discipline us—take us to the woodshed—but wrath? No. “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The Tribulation is the day of His wrath.

The Bible shows a consistent pattern: before judgment, God removes His own. Think Noah—daily life was normal (eating, drinking, marrying) until the day Noah entered the ark, then the flood came. We believe in the imminency of Christ’s return—we’re watching for Him, not planning our Tribulation calendar.

Chapter 4:1 marks that clear turning point—after the Church Age. John is caught up “immediately”—in a flash. No time for last-second fixes: “God, I’ll start tithing,” or “I’ll witness more,” or “I’ll get baptized,” or “I’ll reconcile with my brother.” If you need to get right, do it now. That door in heaven stands open before wrath hits this broken world.

So when John is brought up through the door of Heaven, what does he see first? A throne. “Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” Tonight, I want you to behold that throne with me. We’ll look at it through three fresh lenses that show us how worship works in heaven—and how we’re meant to worship fully right now, just like we will when we see Him face to face.

### **Main Point 1: Fix Your Eyes!**

The very first thing that grabs John’s attention is the Person on the throne. Everything else flows out of that. Fix your eyes there.

**A. He is Great in Glory** (vv. 2–3) At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. <sup>3</sup> And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

The One sitting there looks like a jasper stone and a sardine stone, with a rainbow around the throne like an emerald. The jasper is clear as crystal—like a diamond—radiating brilliant, translucent purity and all-consuming beauty. The sardine stone (or sardius) is blood-red, like a ruby, pointing to the sacrificial blood of Jesus—**perfect holiness combined with indescribable love.** These stones also connect to the high priest’s breastplate in the Old Testament, the first and last stones, showing God carries His people on His heart and how Jesus is one with us.

### **B. He is Great in Grace**

Then the rainbow, but its not a half circle, its a full circle, 360 degrees, glowing emerald green. Green speaks of life. For those who fly planes, many of them have seen circular rainbows. It happens when the light is able to shine all around and not be obstructed by the Earth. A circle has no beginning or end—eternity and perfection. It reminds us of God’s covenant after the flood (Genesis 9), **His unbreakable promises, and eternal life for His children. For believers, the storm is over. Thank God!**

### **C. He is Great in Government (v. 5)**

Out of the throne come lightnings, thunderings, and voices, with seven lamps of fire (the perfect Holy Spirit) burning before it. Even though the rainbow says the storm has passed for God’s people, judgment is about to break on the earth. God’s justice will have the final word.

**Application for Today:** Fix your eyes on Him. Not on the chaos around you. Not on your problems or successes. Worship starts when we lock our gaze on the One worthy simply because of who He is—the Creator, Redeemer, and coming King. In everyday life, that means choosing to behold Him in the Word, in prayer, in creation, and in His people. Start practicing heaven’s worship now by fixing your eyes.

### **Main Point 2: Know Your Place!**

Once your eyes are on the throne, you see the people around it.

**Revelation 4:4** – “And round about the throne there were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”

These 24 elders represent all of us who belong to Jesus—the redeemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. They’re not angels. Angels don’t sit on thrones (the word “seats” here is the same as “throne”), don’t wear crowns, and aren’t described as redeemed. In chapter 5, they sing: “Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” That’s us—the saints caught up at the Rapture.

The number 24 is symbolic: **12 tribes + 12 apostles = God’s complete people across all ages.** White robes picture the righteousness of Christ that covers us. Crowns are the rewards for those who love His appearing. Jesus has made us kings and priests. These elders are a picture of all the redeemed around the throne.

**Application for Today:** Know your place. You’re not an outsider. Through Jesus, you have a reserved seat by grace. You don’t worship to earn acceptance—you worship because you already belong. This kills performance and comparison. Walk in that confidence daily. Put on the white robe of Christ’s righteousness every morning. Start laying down your lesser crowns—success, comfort, control—before Him right now.

### **Main Point 3: Join In!**

Heaven’s worship isn’t quiet or passive—it’s full-throated, nonstop, and involves everyone.

## The Scene of Worship (vv. 5–8)

From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings[a] and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, **6** and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: **7** the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. **8** And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

There’s a sea of glass like crystal (verse 6)—the old temple laver for washing is now solid and sure, picturing the eternal, cleansing Word of God we stand on forever: “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

Then four living creatures (*zoa*—not scary beasts) full of eyes, six wings each, representing all creation (the number 4 is the earth/creation number). Their faces—like a lion, ox/calf, man, and flying eagle—echo the four Gospels (King, Servant, Man, Divine) and God’s post-flood covenant with all creation (Genesis 9). They never rest, day or night: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (verse 8).

## The Response of Worship (vv. 9–11)

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

**11**  
“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.”

When they give glory, the elders fall down, cast their crowns at His feet, and worship! Everything and everyone joins in. We were made for His pleasure (Colossians 1:16–20). One day all creation will be fully redeemed—the lion and lamb together, the earth full of His glory.

**Application for Today:** Join in. Worship isn’t just a Sunday thing—*it’s a lifestyle*. Every time you choose praise over complaining, obedience over ease, generosity over selfishness, you’re rehearsing eternity. We can start casting our crowns today.

## Conclusion

**Can I share a personal testimony?** Worship is like a muscle, you have to work it out. You have to grow in your worship. I don't go to the gym nearly as often as I should. I get my workout in by chasing around my two year old and throwing batting practice to my teenagers. But I have a friend who loves to work out and He has all of these crazy workouts he does like flipping tires and slinging heavy ropes around. One day I worked out with him and tried out some new exercises. The next day, I could hardly move. I knew those exercises were effective because there were muscles I never knew I even had that were screaming for relief. In the same way, I had to grow in my worship.

Sometimes it was as simple as raising my hands in worship. Other times it was giving an offering above and beyond my tithe that didn't make math sense. I've also taken on spiritual discipline challenges, such as fasting or reading the Bible in a year. All of these are examples of ways that I work out my worship muscles and I would encourage you to push yourself beyond your comfort level. Because the day is coming and is actually closer than you think, that you will be worshiping face to face with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the throne room of Heaven!

**And friend, as we close, I want you to see something beautiful in those two stones that describe the One on the throne.**

The **jasper stone** — clear as crystal, sparkling like a diamond — represents the blazing, perfect **holiness** of God. He is pure light. There is no darkness in Him at all. His holiness is so brilliant that it would consume us if we came into His presence in our sin.

But right next to that jasper is the **sardine stone** — a deep, rich blood-red ruby. It speaks of the precious **blood of Jesus Christ**, shed on the cross for sinners like us.

Here's the gospel in two stones:

God is perfectly holy (jasper), and we are not. Our sin separates us from Him. But because of His indescribable love, Jesus stepped in. He took our sin upon Himself and shed His blood (sardine) so that our sins could be forgiven. At the cross, God's holiness and His mercy kissed. The pure jasper and the blood-red sardine are seen together around the throne because they belong together.

The only way any of us will ever stand around that throne — dressed in white with a crown on our head — is if we come to God through the blood of Jesus. The jasper says, "You must be holy." The sardine says, "I have provided a way."

### **Final Challenge:**

So right now, in this moment, I want to ask you: Have you ever personally trusted in that blood — the blood represented by the sardine stone? Have you ever come to Jesus, admitted your sin, and received His forgiveness?

If you've never done that, today is the day. You don't have to clean yourself up first. You don't have to fix your life before you come. Just come to the One whose blood was shed for you. Tell

Him you're a sinner who needs saving. Believe that He died for you and rose again. Receive Him as your Lord and Savior.

When you do, the Bible says He will wash you whiter than snow. He will clothe you in His own righteousness. And one day — maybe very soon — you will stand with the 24 elders around that throne, looking at the jasper and the sardine, and you'll know: "I'm here because of the blood of the Lamb."

For the rest of us, how's your worship? How are you doing with showing and communicating value to God? Is God at the center of your worship like He was in the Tabernacle? Does your worship include sacrifice, not of a goat or a lamb, but of your own life? Do you daily spend time in prayer, consumption of the word, and giving praise to the King of Kings?