

Vision of the Throne

by Denis Lyle

The sermon emphasizes the importance of true spiritual worship and the glory of God's throne, reminding us that God is still on the throne and worthy of our praise and worship.

Scripture: Genesis 18:14, Exodus 28:17, Psalm 45:6, Psalm 115:3, Isaiah 6:1, Malachi 3:6, Colossians 3:11, 1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 4:8, Revelation 4:10

Topics: "Worship And Praise", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the importance of true spiritual worship, emphasizing the need to worship God by recognizing His worth and glory. The sermon delves into Revelation 4-5 to understand how to worship God and give Him the glory He deserves. It explores the absence of the church during the Tribulation period, the significance of the trumpet call for believers, and the heavenly perspective of God's throne, highlighting His greatness, glory, grace, and government. The sermon also discusses the twenty-four elders around God's throne, representing redeemed saints, and the praise offered to God by the four living creatures, showcasing His holiness, sovereignty, omnipotence, eternality, self-existence, and immutability.

Transcript

" True spiritual worship is perhaps one of the greatest needs in our individual lives and in our churches. There is a constant emphasis today on witnessing for Christ and working for Christ, but not enough is said about worshipping Him. To worship means ' to ascribe worth,' (4:11 5:12). It means to use all that we are and have to praise God for all that He is and does. Heaven is a place of worship, and God's people shall worship Him throughout all eternity. A study of Revelation 4-5 will certainly help us better understand how to worship God and give Him the glory that He deserves". 1 Our God is the living God.

He alone is enthroned in Heaven in glory and majesty. . And its when we see God upon His throne that we recognise that no cost is too high to pay. No commitment is too deep to make. No sacrifice is too great to offer. Nothing is too great for our God... Nothing. John had a high view of God for here in (Ch. 4) he discovers that "GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE". (1) THE PLAN OF THE BOOK: "Beginning with chapter 4, the third major section of the book of Revelation is introduced following the divinely inspired out line of 1:19 and fulfilling the promise of revelation of ' the things which shall be hereafter.'

Bleek, almost a century ago, stated the futurist view of Revelation beginning in 4:1 much in the fashion of contemporary futurists.² This section is in contrast to what John saw in chapter 1, his vision of the glorified Christ described in the clause, ' the things which thou hast seen,' and in contrast to to the revelation of

chapters 2 and 3, messages to the seven churches designated as 'the things which are.' Beginning in chapter 4, things are unfolded which have to do with the consummation of the age". 3 ((2) THE ABSENCE OF THE CHURCH: Up to now the churches have occupied a central place in this Book.

But at the end of chapter 3 and beginning with chapter 4 the churches disappear. There are sixteen references to the church in the first three chapters of Revelation, whereas chapters 6 through 18 which cover the Tribulation period do not mention the church once. The natural conclusion drawn from this is that the church will be absent during the events of the Tribulation. Indeed the next time we see the church is in chapter 19 at the end of the age, where she is the Bride of Christ, coming with her Lord in glory.

But how did the church get up there (3) THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET: John says, "After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was it were of a trumpet talking with me which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1). That remind us of both (1 Cor 15:52 and 1 Thess 4:16) which tell us that there is going to be a trumpet blown when the Lord comes. Paul says: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thes 4:16).

One of these days the Lord is going to say to the saints, "Come up hither". What we have in (4:1) is a picture of all believers being "caught up" to the throne at the RAPTURE. And the Rapture is the very first event in God's prophetic calendar. Now here is John summoned to heaven. Why Because God wants to show John worldly events from a heavenly perspective. He invites John up to heaven in order to see earthly affairs from an eternal perspective. Only from the heights of heaven can John see as God sees.

Now what exactly did John see John sees a throne... Gods throne... Sat in heaven. John finds himself in the control centre for the entire universe. Here is the supreme headquarters of Heaven. And the central object of this headquarters is the throne of God. Its interesting to note that the throne of God is mentioned 39 times in Revelation, 13 times in (Rev 4) We could say that Revelation is the "throne book". And (Rev 4) is the "throne chapter". For everything in this chapter relates to the Throne of God. (1) THE PERSON UPON THE THRONE Everything connected with the throne, as it appears in (Rev 4) is awesome, strange and unexpected.

We feel out of depth here for there is nothing to which we can relate. Its like being in a strange country, where language, customs, and architecture are enough like our own to be recognised, yet sufficiently different and strange to make us feel somewhat uncomfortable. Here is John instantaneously catapulted into heaven and immediately captivated by the single, most dominant feature in all Heaven. "A THRONE". (a) HIS GREATNESS: John says, "And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne". (4:2) This divine seat of sovereignty is firmly set in place.

Stable. Secure. Fixed. Established. Permanent. Immovable. Enduring. Eternal. The Psalmist could say, "Thy throne O God is forever and ever". (Ps 45:6) This throne is the highest seat of absolute sovereignty. But John see's that this throne is not vacant, but occupied. Someone is enthroned upon it and that someone is God Himself. (4:8) John actually saw God sitting upon His throne. The word "sat" describes the position of a king who is actually reigning. For example, if a politician is SEATED, he is said to be in office.

If an elected official is put out of office, he is said to be UNSEATED. John sees God SEATED, He is actively exercising the duties of His executive office, administering over the affairs of all His creation. The message is clear to John. No matter what may happen on earth. God is still on His throne in Heaven. God

is still in control. Regardless of earthly appearances, God has not been put out of office. He has not been unseated nor impeached. He is seated and in session, ruling and reigning over all the affairs of providence.

Everything is under control because everything is under HIS control. Was this not the same vision that Isaiah saw Uzziah, Israel's long seated King, had just died, and the nation was in crisis. A national crisis brewed. Who would succeed Uzziah Who was in charge As the nation mourned Isaiah came into the temple to seek God. And it was while he was in the Temple that Isaiah received a sobering vision! He says: "In that year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and His train filled the temple". (Isa 6:1) Although Israel's throne was vacant, Heavens throne was occupied.

How comforting to John to be reminded that GOD WAS STILL ON THE THRONE! John desperately needed this divine perspective. For from his limited vantage point Christianity was struggling. Under the tyranny of Caesar, the Roman Empire was overshadowing and persecuting the Early Church. But hadn't Christ promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church (Matt 16:18) Hadn't John heard it with his own ears But just the opposite seemed true. The Church was being persecuted.

Her preachers killed. Her voice muzzled. Her progress stymied. John must have wondered "WHERE IS GOD IN ALL THIS?". As we see our world falling apart, we need to be reminded that God has not resigned. Nor been put out of office. He's not even up for reelection. GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE. (b) HIS GLORY: The effulgent glory of God, shining bright light from the throne (4:3). "Jasper", as described in (21:11) is as clear as crystal. I think this is what we would call today a diamond.

And the reason "diamonds are a girl's best friend", is that they so beautifully reflect light enhancing her beauty in a spectacular way. This bright light symbolises Gods absolute, unadulterated holiness. It pictures His flawless character: moral perfection: and unstained essence. Whats more John says that God is like a "sardine stone". This was a fiery, deep red gem. A bright glowing stone. It reveals the fiery, red-hot wrath of Gods fury. What a sight for John to behold. To see God Himself enthroned.

Ruling. Controlling. Pure. Blazing. Wrathful. Brilliant. Glorious. (Exod 28:17) John says, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal". (4:6) Here is a massive ocean, like perfect, crystal-like glass under Gods throne. A brilliant rainbow and the flashing colours of emerald green: sardius red: and jasper white all splashing off this sea of crystal. It serves to multiply and magnify the full intensity of the dazzling display of Gods blinding glory. The architecture of Heaven is theocentric, designed for one thing to reflect and magnify the brilliant glory of God.

Here is Gods laser show, showing off His glory for the entire universe to see. No wonder the angels cover their faces. (c) HIS GRACE: "And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald" (4:3) In Old Testament times, the rainbow represented God's faithfulness never to destroy the world again as He did with the flood. (Gen. 9:13-15) It represented Gods gracious covenant. The unending rainbow John describes means Gods grace will endure for ever. Amid the white light of His Holiness and the red flames of Judgement, the green rainbow of Gods grace shines brightly.

For even in the midst of wrath God remembers mercy. (Jam 2:13) Of course, a rainbow signifies that the storm is over. And at this future time the storm will be all over for all believers. For the great and gracious God will be faithful to show mercy to His children. (d) HIS GOVERNMENT: For though the storm is over for the child of God, another is about to break loose on the earth. Gods great government is about to work itself out on earth. "And out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were

seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (4:5).

John describes this same violent storm in the seventh seal judgement. (8:1-5) The same terminology: the same words: the same fury. Again John describes this same violent storm in the seventh trumpet judgment. (11:15-19) Again the same words, the same fury. Its exactly the same in the seventh vial judgement. (16: 17-18) What wrath there is going to be poured out on this Old World at the end of the age. And this Judgement will be FACTUAL for the Holy Spirit spoken of as " the seven spirit's of God", will be there as the Prosecutor of the human race. (Jn 16:8) Will Gods people will the church, will the saints go through through this terrible tribulation NO: NO: NO: Every answer of Scripture is an emphatic NO.

For when this day of awful judgement comes, God's people will be in glory with their Saviour". God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thes 5:9) (2) THE PEOPLE ABOUT THE THRONE As John continues to peer into the throne room with captivating awe and amazement he observes another facet of Heaven... Twenty-four thrones around God's throne. Now the word "seats", (4:4) is thronoi, thrones. These are subsidiary thrones, subordinate to Gods higher throne.

And upon these thrones are seated 24 elders who share in Gods reign. Now who are these elders " Some, such as W.R. Newell, are convinced that these are twenty-four heavenly beings of an angelic order which is associated with God's government in some special way. Most other premillennial writers understand them to be twenty-four redeemed human beings around the throne who, though individuals, represent all the redeemed. This is not to say that there were not more than twenty-four around the throne, but it is to say that they represent all the redeemed.

In the New Testament, elders as the highest officials in the church do represent the whole church (Acts 15:6 20:28), and in the Old Testament, twenty four elders were appointed by King David to represent the entire Levitical priesthood. (Chron 24) When those twenty-four elders met together in the temple precincts in Jerusalem, the entire priestly house was represented. Thus it seems more likely that the elders represent redeemed human beings not angels". 4 The Greek word for elders is presbuteros, from which we get the English word Presbyterian.

These are the ones caught up to heaven at the Rapture and they symbolise all the saints of all the ages. (a) THEY ARE NUMBERED: " Four and twenty elders". (4:4) " The number of these elders is not without its significance. Scott comments, ' But why twenty-four The significance of the numeral must be sought for in the first book of Chronicles 24,25. David divided the priesthood into twenty-four orders or courses, each course serving in turn (Luke 1:5, 8,9) The respective elders or chiefs of these courses would represent the whole of the Levitical priesthood.

There would thus be twenty-four chief priests and one high priest. Their varied service corresponded to that of the elders in heaven, for the temple (no less than the tabernacle), in structure, vessels, and services, was framed according to things in the heavens. God's people are termed an holy priesthood (1 Pet 2:5) and a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9), and in both characters they are here seen in action.' Thus they seem to be representative of the entire heavenly priesthood, associated with Christ, the Great High Priest, in the unfolding of the consummation of the age". 5 Are angels ever NUMBERED in the Bible (Heb 12:22) (b) THEY ARE IDENTIFIED: "Four and twenty elders" (4:4).

Now that is something angels are never called. (c) THEY ARE SEATED: Where are they seated John says, "And upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting" (4:4). In heaven redeemed saints are seen sitting upon thrones, but never angels (20:4). (d) THEY ARE CLOTHED: "In white raiment" (4:4). Now is

not the garment of glorified believers in heaven (3:5) White robes represent the imputed righteousness of Christ that makes a perfect covering for our sin. At the same time they also represent the righteous acts of the saints (19:8). (e) **THEY ARE REWARDED:** " And they had on their heads crowns of gold". (4:4) The word for "crown", is *stephanos* its the garland of success.

Now angels are never crowned, you see only believers are rewarded in heaven. (g) **THEY ARE DISTINGUISHED:** These elders are clearly distinguished from angels (7:11). Here then are redeemed saints reigning in heaven with Christ. (3) **THE PRAISE TO THE THRONE** As we look at this scene in heaven we see worship. What is worship? It is honour and adoration being directed toward God. Worship is ascribing to God His worth or affirming His supreme value. (a) **THE BEASTS SHOW US WHO WE WORSHIP:** The word "beast" can be translated "Creatures".

Who are these four living creatures J. Vernon McGee writes: "These creatures, of the highest intelligence, are in God's presence. They resemble the Cherubim of Ezekiel 1:5-10: 10:20 and the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2,3. Are they a new order of creatures in heaven that have not been revealed in Scripture" 6 These are angelic beings probably cherubim, in the immediate vicinity of the throne, forming an inner circle of worshippers. (Ezekiel 10:15 20 28:14-16) One had the face of a lion, one the face of an ox, one the face of a man, and one the face of an eagle.

In other words each reflects an aspect of the likeness of the Lord Jesus portrayed by the 4 Gospels. But what are these cherubim doing They are doing what they were created to do... They are worshipping the living God. They adore God for: (1) **HIS HOLINESS:** They say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (4:8). This means that God is holy to the supreme or superlative degree. In English we express degree by saying that something is good, better or best. In Hebrew to repeat a word three times meant the superlative degree...

It was the very best. Thus, "Holy, holy, holy", means that God is holy, holier, holiest. God is the holiest Person in the entire universe. (2) **HIS SOVEREIGNTY:** This One who is holy is none other than "The Lord God" (4:8). **LORD** (*kurios*) means "Sovereign Ruler: Absolute Master: Ruling Potentate". He has authority to do **WHATEVER** He pleases: **WHENEVER** He pleases: with **WHOMEVER** He pleases. The Psalmist said: "Our God is in the heavens He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased". (Ps 115:3) (3) **HIS OMNIPOTENCE:** For He is "THE ALMIGHTY". (4:8) This means that He is all-powerful".

Is anything too hard for the Lord" (Gen. 18:14) (4) **HIS ETERNALITY:** He is "The Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come". (4:8) (5) **HIS SELF-EXISTENCE:** For He is the God "Who is" (4:8). Do you recall that this is how He revealed Himself to Moses. "I AM THAT I AM". (Exod 3:14) It simply means that He depends on no one or nothing else for His existence. He simply is. He is all and in all. (Col 3:11) He upholds all: provides for all: maintains all: watches over all: guides all: directs all.

All by Himself. (6) **HIS IMMUTABILITY:** For the God who "was", is the God who "is", and the God who "was and is", is the God who "is to come". He never changes. He is eternally the same. This world changes. Culture changes. Society changes. Fashions change. People change. But God never changes. He says: "I am the Lord I change not". (Mal 3:6) (b) **THE ELDERS SHOW US HOW TO WORSHIP:** We are not surprised to find these worshippers flat on their face before God. People in the presence of God always fall down before Him.

John says: "The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever" (4:10) Isn't this what we feel when we genuinely worship God Unworthiness:

Reverence: Humility: Brokenness. This is the scene in Heaven. This is our God; He is still on the Throne. Here is WHO we must worship. Here is HOW we must worship. Let's give Him the glory.

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