

# Revelation 4 & 5

by John McGregor

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*The sermon explores the themes of access to heaven, the activity and adoration in heaven, and the worthiness of Jesus as the Lamb of God in Revelation 4 and 5.*

**Duration:** 41:02

**Scripture:** Revelation 2:10, Revelation 4:1, Revelation 4:3, Revelation 4:5, Revelation 4:11, Revelation 5:8, Revelation 5:13

**Topics:** "Revelation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the book of Revelation, specifically chapters 4 and 5. He emphasizes the idea of access into heaven, highlighting the significance of the open door mentioned in Revelation 4:1. The preacher also mentions the activities and adoration happening in heaven, emphasizing the worship and praise poured out to God. He encourages the listeners to focus on God and look up amidst the difficulties of life, just like John did when he saw the open door in heaven.

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## Transcript

Revelation chapter four and chapter five. Now, sometimes I only do a few verses, but today we're gonna do two chapters, so that's a giant leap forward, I think, isn't it? And we've been talking about the fact that we would make a visit to heaven, and that's exactly where the position is in these scriptures in Revelation four and five. And so we'll read the word and pray together and just spend a little time knowing the touch of God in his word and by his spirit.

Revelation four, verse one says, "After these things, I looked and behold, "a door standing open in heaven. "And the first voice which I had heard, "like the voice 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 sardis in appearance. "And there was a rainbow around the throne "like an emerald in appearance. "Around the throne were 24 thrones, "and upon the thrones, I saw 24 elders sitting, "clothed in white garments "and golden crowns on their hands.

"Out from the throne came flashes of lightning "and sounds and peals of thunder. "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.

"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. "When the living creatures gave glory and honor "and thanks to him who sits on the throne, "to him who lives forever and ever, "the 24 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.

"I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, "a book written inside and on the back, "sealed up with seven seals. "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals? "No one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth "was able to open the book or to look into it. "Then I began to weep greatly "because no one was found worthy "to open the book or to look into it.

"One of the elders said to me, stop weeping. "Behold, the lion that is from the tribe of Judah, "the root of David, has overcome "so as to open the book and its seals. "And I saw between the throne "with the four living creatures and the elders, a lamb, "standing as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, "which are the seven spirits of God, "sent out into all the earth.

"He came and took the book out of the hand of him "who sat on the throne. "When he had taken the book, "the four living creatures and the 24 elders "fell down before the lamb, "each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, "which are the prayers of the saints. "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the book, to break its seals, "for you were slain and purchased for God with your blood, "man from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

"You have made them to be a kingdom "and priests to our God, "and they will reign upon the earth. "Then I looked and I heard the voice "of many angels around the throne "and the living creatures and the elders, "and the number of them was myriads of myriads "and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power "and riches and wisdom and might "and honor and glory and blessing. "And every creature which is in heaven "and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, "and all things in them, I heard saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb, "be blessing and honor and glory and dominion "forever and ever.' "And the four living creatures kept saying, Amen, "and the elders fell down and worshiped." Let's join our hearts in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the gift of prayer. And we thank you this morning that as we cry out to you, you have promised to hear and to answer prayer. And as we come this morning to these verses, we ask that you would take them and encourage our hearts, draw us to the place of true worship in spirit and in truth.

Lord, in the quietness of these moments, would you speak into our hearts a new song, a song about the worthiness of the lamb of God who has loved us and purchased us with his blood. Father, may you be blessed as we open your word, but may our hearts be touched with a fresh coal from heaven's altar. In Jesus' strong name we pray.

Well, we took a break over Christmas to think about Christmas things and New Year's to think about the double portion as we looked at the life of Elisha for a little bit. And so we returned to Revelation and I said last week, we're gonna pay a visit to heaven. And as you see in the text, the scene has changed from earth to heaven.

And I've always thought if Revelation had to end at the end of chapter three, it'd be a rather dismal book because in those three chapters, we dealt with seven letters that were sent to the churches. And in five of the churches, there were all kinds of problems and troubles and wrongs and woundedness and all the rest. In one, there was a sense of evangelism.

And God said, I sent before you an open door. In the other, they were persecuted for Christ. And he said, I'll put nothing else on you.

Be faithful to death. And I will give you the crown of life. And then as we shift gears into the fourth chapter, that opening verse is priceless.

You see what it says? It says, after these things, after all that was said to the seven churches. And you'll find seven is repetitive in Revelation. There are seven churches.

It speaks in the text here twice about the seven spirits of God. We're gonna look at a book with seven seals. We're going to deal with seven trumpets and seven bowls before we're done with the book of Revelation.

And the last message that I'll preach on it will be entitled, A Message from the Church in Heaven to the Church on Earth. And I could not help but think this morning as you were singing so well, and I commend you for belting out those wonderful praise and worship songs and hymns. Here is one of those times when you can see that what happens in heaven is actually happening here, where the church is united in that sense that those who have gone on before are still at worship, even as we are this morning, worshiping him.

So I'm glad we didn't have to finish at the end of chapter three. And he says, after these things, he saw an open door in heaven. And I love that, don't you? You ever notice how sometimes you can get focused on all the stuff that's going on and that you have to deal with? And then sort of above it all, it's as if the wonderful voice of the Holy Spirit is just saying, hey, look up.

No, it's a bit like Job in his problems. He says, I looked before, but he's not there. I looked behind, but he's not there.

I looked to the side, but I do not behold him. I looked the other way, I do not see him. And you feel like screaming, look up! John is seeing that open door in heaven.

And so this morning, let's think about four things from these two chapters. First, let's begin where the text begins and think about access. Oh, I don't mean access communications.

I think about access into heaven. He says, I saw an open door. Now, have you ever noticed that the book of Revelation tells us there are 12 gates in heaven? And that's true, and we'll see them along the way, but there's only one door.

Isn't that interesting? And he is looking at the access to heaven as he sees that open door. So let's stop for a moment and just think, what is that open door? In John chapter 10 and verse seven, you'll find Jesus said this, I am the door. So as he sees the open door, he's not only hearing the voice of the one who loved him and saved him, but he's looking at the one who is the door, the one who is the way into heaven.

And I often bump into people who say, well, I hope I'm going to heaven or I think I'm going to heaven or if I've done enough good things, I'm sure I'll get into heaven. And I just say, I haven't done enough good things. I'll never do enough good things.

There's not anything in me that would allow me to go to heaven, but I'm going because of Jesus. He is that open door, that access. And so when you think about this passage, it starts off causing us to think about how do we get in to heaven? And Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

There is no other way into that place, which is God's home. And as you see here, there is a throne in heaven. He says in verse two, immediately, I was in the spirit and behold, a throne was standing in heaven.

Heaven is the home of God. It's not our natural abode. Now there is an entitlement in people.

These days, we think we're entitled to all kinds of things. And maybe we even think we're entitled to go to heaven, but heaven is God's home. So if some Irish riffraff come and knocked on your door, would you let them in? Brad says no, smart man.

But yet, when we come repenting of our sins and trusting in Christ and knowing that he has saved us, heaven becomes not just God's home, but yours and mine. And that's what Jesus meant when in John 14, he said, in my Father's house, there are many dwelling places. I go to prepare a place for you.

For who? For those who had put their trust in him, those who were following him, those who knew that he was the way, the truth, and the life. And dear friends, a lot of people are scared to say this today in our society because we're constantly being bombarded with the fact that there are no absolutes. I wanna tell you something.

This is absolute truth. No one will enter heaven without Christ Jesus as Savior, no one. That's not what John says.

That's what the Lord Jesus says. And so it is so vital that you and I know not just that there is a way, there is access to heaven through Jesus, but it is vital that we know Jesus, that we have received him, and that we're walking with him in obedience. So as you think about this text, it opens up dealing with the access to heaven.

And let me not mess up this morning and just dwell on that for one more moment to say, if I'm speaking to someone this morning and you're not sure that when this life is over, heaven is your home, don't walk out of here today without making sure. Nobody is guaranteed tomorrow. I was talking to somebody this week who was nearly in an accident, and he said, people say, when it comes close to death time, I'll repent.

But he said, that's not actually what I felt like doing when I was nearly in an accident. It doesn't work that way. So if you're here and you're not sure, make sure, make it today, your moment of decision for Jesus and to trust in him and to ask him for forgiveness and for spiritual life.

We only go to heaven by invitation. And John is getting his invitation here, come up here. And I make that same invitation to anyone this morning who's not in Christ.

Come, not to John, but to Jesus and trust in him. He is an ever present and so real savior. You know, as we think about the gospel, that simplicity of access to heaven, you see, it's not in the natural at all, for John says, I was in the spirit.

And the spirit opens that truth, how desperately we need Jesus. Access. Now John was called up into heaven to go for a specific purpose.

It says at the end of verse one, come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things. So yeah, what would it feel like if you knew the future? What would it feel like if you knew the winning numbers for lotto 649? Gord says he'd buy two of them. Well, part of what we see in Revelation is that God didn't want his people to be stuck just in the persecution and the difficulty and all of the things that we dealt with as we walked through the seven churches.

He wanted us to know that there is a future glorious and bright, powerful and strong. He wanted us to know those things that will come upon this earth and high it will be. And so as you just consider this visit to heaven, this is the reason why he is asked to come up here.

I'm so glad that God knows the end from the beginning. And it's good just to rest in him, isn't it? Second thing that we see in our text is that there is activity in heaven. Some people tell me, you know, just to float around eternity on a cloud with a harp.

Well, doesn't sound too exciting to me. But when you look at the activity in heaven, it says that from the throne, there are thunders and lightnings. It goes on to describe the scene and we learn a great deal about our God.

As you consider what John is putting into words here, you come very quickly to the understanding that God is holy. He is a holy God and he is sovereign. There is nothing that is beyond his rule.

And I am so grateful when I think about words that express that like El Shaddai and Genesis, he's called El Shaddai, the almighty one. Nothing beyond his reach or rule. Doesn't it give you an idea that it might not work to have the thinking that when I die, I'll go to heaven and stand in front of God and just tell him off.

You didn't do a very good job as far as I'm concerned. I don't think that's gonna work. Because as I look at what the Bible says of heaven, there is an overwhelming sense of the holiness and the glory and the power and the authority of an almighty God.

Oh man. Woo hoo! Because I don't know about you, but I get so tired of the affairs of man and people and all of the stuff. And oh how wonderful it is to know that there's one who is sitting on that throne.

So powerful, so glorious. Ephesians 1.11 says he performs all things according to the counsel of his will. You see here in verse, he is eternal, the eternal one.

It just goes on and on. He is the creator, says verse 11. He's the cause of everything, says John 1.3. I like that.

No matter how much we try to hide him, still he will make himself known. I smile these days because there's a book going around if you haven't read it, you might like to. It's called Heaven is for Real.

It's about a little boy who went there and came back. And don't ask me to explain it. I'm so glad there are some mysteries in the hand of God.

But I do know this, you'll enjoy what he has to say. His appearance is dazzling, says verse three. Beyond words, he speaks and displays his power in verse five.

Oh, even when I read these two chapters, I have an overwhelming sense that I might not feel like sticking out my chest and saying, look what I did in his presence. And I might not feel like saying, boy, I faced so many things that you couldn't take care of, God, because I think he can take care of them all. There's activity in heaven.

It's gonna be a busy place. Thirdly, there's adoration in heaven. You look in both these chapters, you see there's worship going on.

Everything it says in verse 11 of chapter four was created for his pleasure. Wow, what is our reason for living anyway? Well, you know, if I could just get a bit more. If people would just listen.

If our reason for living ought to be for his pleasure. Oh, folks, look at that scene in heaven. The joy is just pumping off those verses.

I did not read a verse anywhere that said those creatures and those 24 elders were sitting just weeping it out. When will the service be over? Will they go on for much longer? God, help us. No.

There is an overwhelming sense of, oh, I don't wanna move from here. This is glorious. Yes.

Created for his pleasure. Some people that are under the sound of my voice this morning have fought all their lives with a sense of I'm not good enough. I'm not smart enough.

I'm not something enough. And the answer to that, my dear friends, is that you were created. For his pleasure.

Stop trying to be something other than what he created. Live in the fullness of his spirit. Worship him from the depths of your heart.

The adoration that's going on around the throne in glory doesn't look like, how great is our God. He with me, how great. It's full of the passion and the love and the presence of God.

This adoration is so incredible. It flows through these two chapters just in one piece, doesn't it? There is that worship that is the center of everything in heaven. Created to worship him.

Falling before him. What? You know, I don't think that those angels, elders, and those creatures in heaven that are sought to be explained in words almost that we can't understand, look at this thing and think about, when will it be my turn? When will I get to sit on the throne? There's not one mention in these two chapters of anything of self. It's all about the glory of him who sits on that throne.

I love it. There's nobody climbing. There's no point in some of my pastor friends saying, next time I'll get another foot up the ladder, I'll get a bigger church.

How the stench of that kind of thinking must hang in the nostrils of the mighty one. There's nobody getting above. There's just a central focus on him who is on the throne.

Ah, John, you could dwell on this for a long time. I could. But I'll move us into chapter five.

And as you move into chapter five, the fourth thing that we see is that John is devastated because there's nobody who can open this book. No one. Not in heaven, not on earth, not on earth.

Under the earth, no one. And then we come to that little verse. It made me stop when I read it.

But the lion of the tribe of Judah, the lamb of God, there is Jesus again, do you see it? Stepping in to say, I know nobody can do it. Nobody could go to the cross either. So I went.

And now I have the ability and the authority, he is saying. Give me that scroll. And if you've wondered how a book could be sealed seven ways, it's a scroll.

And we open a portion and read, and a portion more. There is Jesus, the one who has the ability. John was lifted to heaven for a season and to see what is to come.

And there is that lion and the lamb. It's a perfect picture of strength and weakness. And the first time that we saw Jesus, we saw him in his weakness, in his humility as a little baby.

We just looked at it all through the Christmas season. But the next time that we see Jesus, we'll see him in his glory. And in his strength as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

We will see him and every eye will see him. And there will be no argument, no more time to sort of negotiate and work it out because he is who he is. The one of absolute authority and the one of absolute ability.

And don't you love it? It says, they sang a new song. Right after there, they sang a new song. Why? Because as worship continues, there the son of God is lifted up in the glory of who he is.

There is that new song. Do you ever get a new song in your heart? Just something that's pumping with the truth of God. Here's what's happening in heaven.

As Jesus takes that book and takes his role and place and authority, praise is poured out. Well, we've looked at the four things through the text and we've barely scratched the surface of it. But let me give you an application as we move toward closing this morning.

John lived in very difficult times. Do you? Is there anybody here this morning who would say, I have absolutely no difficulty in my life, not one piece. No difficulty with my kids, no difficulty with my finances, no difficulty with my friends, no difficulty with my enemies.

Everything in my life is perfect. No, we live with difficulties. John lived in a time of difficulty and the Lord wanted to lift him above that to see and to look and to experience and to understand, to get to heaven and to see the need of accepting Christ because he is all when you get to heaven.

He can't be manipulated. He can't be controlled. I was created for his pleasure.

All of heaven is focused on that very thing. Now, I wanna ask you something and I always warn you when I wanna stop preaching and start interfering. So, now's the time to put the walls up, ears, fingers in ears, whatever you wanna do because here it comes.

If Jesus is the focus of your life, and the intent of everything in heaven, why is it that on the earth we become so willy-nilly? I'll go to church and worship if I feel like it. Maybe I'll talk to somebody about Jesus this week if I feel like it. All my friends, do you see the difference between the church in heaven and the church on earth? And we would all stand convicted, wouldn't we? As we think about it.

Worship. When we see God, we also see ourselves. How often do I stop and just focus on him? How often is worship a part of my life beyond the hour or so on Sunday morning? How often do I wanna move into the presence of God and let all the rest slip away? How many burdens I carry, how deep the wounds of the human heart can be.

And sometimes I forget that one of the parts of worship is that it's in his presence. There's real healing. It's in worshipping him that my raw emotions find the healer.

It's in focusing on him that I find peace. When my focus on self fades away, and I'm lifted in his name, held and healed in his presence by his love and his mercy, then my will is surrendered to his. Would you join me just at the throne of grace as we pray? And as I'm praying, I'll ask Bill and Bruce to come back and lead us in one of those worship songs as we close in a few moments.

Dear heavenly father, heaven is eternally filled with praise and worship for who you are. But oh, Lord, hear the difficulties and the wounds that we see. Take our eyes off you, onto self.

Father, this morning, we want to just pause for a moment or two and ask you, precious Lord, would you this morning just touch us with forgiveness? With the sovereign touch of your hand, would you lift our eyes again to see the one who is the open door in heaven? Lord, if there is one or more here who are not sure whether they'll go to heaven or not, this morning, this day, spirit of God, touch each heart. My father, as we're just still before you, we want to take a moment just in the quiet stillness to worship you. And just from your heart in the quietness, speak to the Lord Jesus.

Think about what we have read this morning. Speak to him and ask him to speak to you. Lord, in some ways, we're so small, so insignificant compared to all that you have created.

And yet it was on our behalf that Jesus came, that he died and rose again. We are created for your pleasure. And oh, Father, would you help each one of us this week just to walk in the pleasure of God with a surrendered heart, with the fullness of your Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives, not with a focus on ourselves, but on you, the risen Lord.

Enable us to continue to minister to one another in the strength of your power. And now, precious Father, as we think of leaving this place, enable us to lift our voice, but the life that's behind the voice and the heart that is the center of the person, to join the church in heaven as they worship you. May we also worship you this morning.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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