



# REVELATION

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LAMB

## Session 07

*A Glimpse into the  
Heavenly Throne Room*  
Revelation 4:1-11

### Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Revelation 4:1-11 (or listen to it being read) and reflect on the following questions: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? Why? 2) What does this passage communicate to you about God? 3) How would you like to respond to what God may be desiring to accomplish in you?

### Digging Deeper

1. The imagination is active in every part of learning. How have you imagined this throne room scene? Are there similarities to any of the artwork that was shared during the sermon?
2. While there are many details in this throne room vision, it is actually quite subdued compared to similar accounts found outside the Bible. Do you think this is instructive for how we approach Revelation? Why?
3. There is much speculation about the identity of the elders in verse 4, though their significance is highlighted by their prominence in the vision (coming immediately after the description of the throne). How does the explanation that they are representatives of the fullness of God's people fit with your understanding? How does their role in the heavenly throne room reflect the purpose and focus of our own lives as Christ followers?
4. The Spirit of God is represented in the throne room vision as flaming lamps. Think back to the Bible stories you know where God shows up as/with fire (see Exodus 3:2, 13:21; Leviticus 9:4, 10:2; 2 Kings 18:2-39; or Acts 2 if you need some ideas). Why do you think fire represents God's Spirit so effectively?
5. While the identity of the elders and the four living creatures may be debated, it is crystal clear what their purpose is: to offer continuous worship to God. What can we learn about worship by both their actions and their words in verses 8-11?
6. Think a bit about how the symbolism in this passage works. What do the various pictures (the throne, the description of the elders and the living creatures) represent? How do you think the original audience of the vision would have understood them? Do you think there is a difference to how the images land today?

### For Groups

1. The vision given to John is magnificent. Its details that enable us to hear and see some of what John might have been experiencing in that moment. Is there a place, or an experience, that has caused you a great sense of awe? Share the details of that experience with the group.
2. In response to these experiences that you have shared, take time as a group to create a response of praise and thanksgiving. You could write a poem together, a song, or craft something like a collage. You can use verses 8 or 11 as a starting point.
3. "Revelation instructs us in worship. It shows us where, why, and how to praise God. Worship takes our minds off our problems and focuses them on God. Worship leads us from individual meditation to corporate praise. Worship causes us to consider and appreciate God's character. Worship lifts our perspective from the earthly to the heavenly" (*NLT Chronological Study Bible*, 1808). Take some time in your group to worship God through music. You could have someone play music for you to sing along to, or find some music to listen to reflectively.

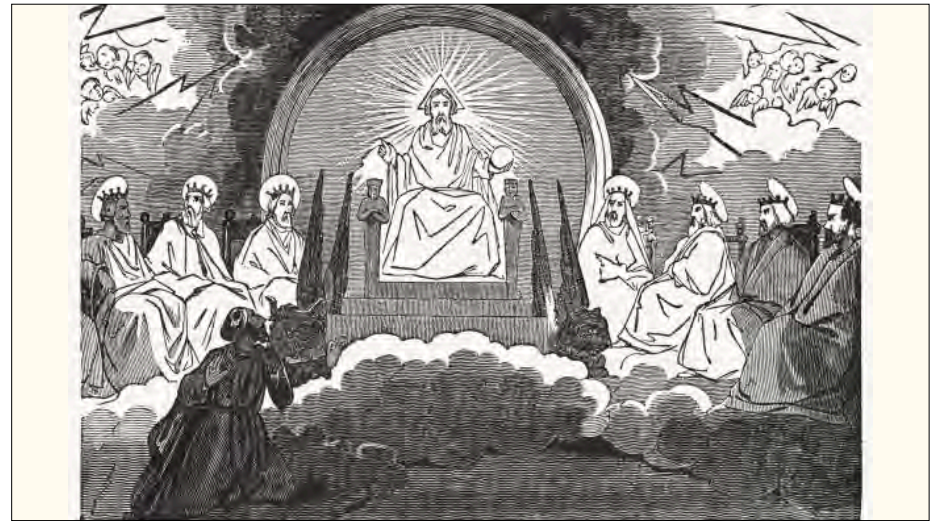
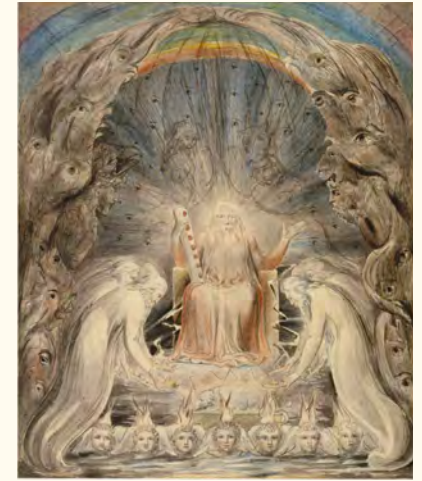
### Living it Out

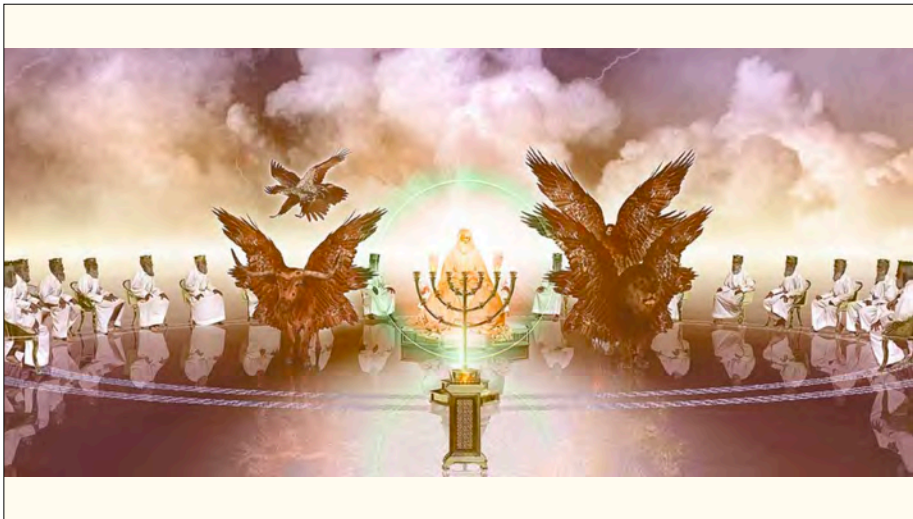
1. God is upon the throne. Take some time to reflect upon what else in your life competes for "throne space." Ask God to help reveal these things to you, and give you courage to re-prioritize.
2. How do you think John's vision would have impacted the original Christ followers in the seven churches?
3. Join with the elders in worship of our God and proclaim aloud Revelation 4:11: "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."



# A GLIMPSE INTO THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM

Revelation 4:1-11  
October 22, 2023 | Tyler Williams





## APPROACHING THE VISION

The glimpse into the Heavenly Throne Room is to answer the question, “to whom does the earth belong?” “Who is ruler of the world?”

The answer is unequivocal:

**God is upon his throne!**

## APPROACHING THE VISION

- Belongs to a larger vision that extends all the way to chapter 22.
- Chapters 4-5 belong inseparably together as the interpretive key to the entire book.
  - God as Creator: The Throne of God (4:1-11).
  - God as Redeemer: The Lamb of God (5:1-14).

## APPROACHING THE VISION

“The Throne of God and the Lamb of God... reveal in pictures the essential theology of the book of Revelation: God the creator reigns and is worthy of our complete devotion, and Jesus the faithful, slaughtered Lamb of God reigns with God, equally worthy of our complete devotion” (Michael Gorman, *Reading Revelation*, 103).



## THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM

The imagery of the heavenly throne room draws from:

- Ancient Near Eastern divine council imagery.
- Old Testament passages, especially Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6 (as well as Exod 24; 1Kgs 22; Jer 23; Dan 7).
- Jewish Apocryphal accounts (1Enoch 14, 71; 2Enoch 1-12; Testament of Levi; 3Baruch; etc).
- Roman scenes of the enthroned Emperor surrounded by his council.

## JOHN'S VISION

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven...” (4:1).

- “After this I looked” – indicates a new vision as John is given a glimpse into the heavenly throne room.
- “A door standing open” – Perfect in Greek, suggesting the door remains open (cf. Gen 28:17).

## JOHN'S VISION

“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’” (4:1).

- “the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet” – the same source as the first vision, namely Christ (1:10-13).
- “What must take place after this” – Referring to 4:1-22:9.

## THE HEAVENLY THRONE

“At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it” (4:2-3).

- Everything in the vision is described in relationship to the throne (14x in 11 verses).
- There is no attempt to describe God at all or what form God may have taken.

## THE HEAVENLY THRONE

“And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne” (4:2-3).

- Much in the vision has John trying to describe the indescribable: “had the appearance of” or “like” (*homoios*, ομοιος; in 6x in 4:3, 6, 7)

## THE HEAVENLY THRONE

- The gemstones reflect the first (ruby) and last (jasper) stones in breastplate of the high priest (Exod 28:17-20).
- The multicoloured rainbow “shone like an emerald” is referring to its refractive quality.





## THE 24 ELDERS

“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” (4:4).

- Much speculation about their identity.
- The uniqueness and prominence of elders highlights their significance.



## THE 24 ELDERS

- Heavenly representatives of the fullness of the people of God (2x12), both Jew (12 tribes) and Gentile (12 apostles), symbolically representing the church universal.
- “Elder” is never used as a title for angelic beings; but is used for Christian leaders (Acts 14:23; 15:20; 1Tim 5; Titus 1:5; 1Pet 5).
- They are always distinguished from angels (5:11; 7:11).



## THE 24 ELDERS

- Thrones (3:21), white garments (3:5), and crowns (3:11) are used elsewhere to describe the rewards of the Christ followers who persevere in their faith.
- They serve a priestly and royal function, which is the same role as redeemed image-bearing Christ followers.
- “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (5:10; cf. 1:6).



## THE 24 ELDERS

- Whoever they may represent, what they do is clear:
- They fall down and worship, and cast their crowns before the throne (4:10; see also 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4).
- The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and to enjoy God forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism).



## BEFORE THE THRONE

“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. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal” (4:5-6).

- Theophany recalls Israel at Sinai (Exod 19:16-19).
- The seven lamps are equated with the “seven spirits of God” (also 3:1; 5:6), which is a reference to the sevenfold Spirit of God.
- The sea of glass represents evil and chaos (cf. 13:1); highlights the truth that even the source of evil is not outside the sovereignty of God. In the new heavens and earth there will be no sea (21:1).



## THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

“In the centre, around the throne, were living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 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. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings” (4:6b-8a).



## THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

- Main features echo Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6 (identified as seraphim in Isa 6:2).
- The four beings may represent
  - An order of angels who lead the heavenly host.
  - Pagan gods who are shown to be in submission to the one true God.
  - The orders of life in God’s creation: lion (wild), ox (domesticated), eagle (flying), and human.



## THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

- The eyes symbolize that as God’s agents they see all.
- Whatever they represent, God controls them all and they were made for his ceaseless praise and support.



## THE HEAVENLY LITURGY

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty’, who was, and is, and is to come” (4:8)

- God’s character: Holy (cf. Isa 6:3).
- God’s power: the Almighty (*pantokrator* trans. *El Shaddai, Yahweh Sabaoth*) — All-Powerful, Omnipotent (One); used only of God.
- God’s eternal nature: “who was, and is, and is to come” (cf. 1:4).



## THE HEAVENLY LITURGY

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (4:11).

- “Our Lord and God.”
- Worthy to receive glory and honour and power.
- God is worthy because God created all things.



## RESPONSE

How would those in the seven churches respond?

- To those who were guilty of accommodating?
- To those who were complacent and self-satisfied?
- To those who have been faithful?



## RESPONSE

How should we respond?

- God is sovereign and rules the universe as its Creator and Sustainer!
- This vision of worship becomes a *call to worship* as only God is worthy of our worship!