

# Worship in Revelation

## PART 2 • CREATOR • REVELATION 4:9-11

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It is good to be together with God's people this morning! As usual, I hope all of you have the elements for the Lord's Supper, as John/Aaron will be leading us in the prayers for the Supper right after we study together this morning. And then, Chris will be leading in several songs before we dismiss.

Before we get to our study of God's word today, we also want to make sure that we at least briefly explain God's plan of salvation. The gospel is the good news concerning Jesus and his death, burial, and resurrection. We obey the gospel by believing it, by turning away from sin, by publicly confessing our belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be immersed with the Lord in the act of baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins.

And once again, we do have two examples this morning, starting with one from the Lord's church down in Rome, Georgia. They posted last week and said, "We were blessed with a second baptism at Oak Hill today. This time, Brother Eddie Hood, an elder at the Callahan Street Church Of Christ, baptized someone we met door knocking a few weeks ago. What a day!" So, we rejoice with our new brother today. But you might have noticed, this was their "second baptism" last Sunday. I hadn't seen the first, so I went back to their Facebook page, and found the first! And on this one, they say, "Great news! We rejoice in the Spiritual Rebirth of Courtney Tincer who was baptized into Christ today, October 8th, 2021. God bless you!" And we are sharing both of these here in Madison, Wisconsin, by way of encouragement: What these two have done, you can do today. So, if you have any questions, if you would like to study further, please pull me aside after worship today; or, get in touch with John or Aaron. Our contact information is always on the front of the bulletin each week (on the wall right inside the front door).

This morning, we are continuing in our brief series of lessons where we are focusing on worship in Revelation 4-5. We are looking at a series of what might be described as "songs" or maybe "statements of praise" in these two chapters. As we learned last week, the book of Revelation has some terrifying images, and yet the Lord does not start with those images, but he starts by revealing himself to John (who is in prison on the Roman prison island of Patmos), he gives a series of messages to seven congregations in Asia Minor, and then he invites John to step through an open door into heaven. And as we saw last week, John steps through that door into God's throne room, and he sees these four creatures praising God continually, saying, "**Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord**

**God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.**" Last week, then, we took some time to consider the fact that God is "holy." He is different. He is set apart. He is God and we are not.

This morning, we come to a second statement of praise. Last week, we were introduced to those twenty-four elders on those twenty-four thrones around the throne of God. Today, these elders join in with the praise that comes from the four living creatures. Some have described it as a "crescendo of praise," a "cascade," or even "an avalanche of praise" – starting with the four living creatures, continuing with the elders joining in, and continuing with other groups until all of creation joins in by the end of Chapter 5. But this morning, it's the elders who join in. And as we learned last week: This is a message we need to hear. Things are not right in the world right now, and even here in this building, it's easy to get distracted by our own challenges and concerns, and so we need the reminder that worship is important. When we worship, we join in on a behind-the-scenes reality.

By the way, the New Testament gives very few details concerning what worship really is. We have a few verses here and there, but Revelation actually tells us more about worship than just about any other book in the New Testament. So, this morning, we return to Revelation, and today we come to Revelation 4:9-11. I would encourage you to follow along in your own copy of the Bible. We will put the text on the wall as we look at it together, but then we will come back to the mountains up here as we move through it. As we start, though, let's look together at Revelation 4:9-11. **\*\*PPT\*\*** The words of the apostle John in Revelation 4:9-11,

***<sup>9</sup> And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four 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, <sup>11</sup> "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."***

As we look at this second example of worship in Revelation 4-5, as we did last week, I'd like to divide our thoughts into two basic categories, starting with what John SEES on this occasion (what is happening here), and then we will move along to what John HEARS around the throne (the statement of praise offered by the elders down in verse 11).

# I. But we start with what he SEES on this occasion.

In verses 9-10, as the four living creatures praise God, the twenty-four elders also join in. As we just briefly noted last week, these beings do not appear to be angels, but these seem to be human beings in some form or another. And they are old, they are "**elders**," they are elderly. And as we noted last week, these twenty-four men most likely represent all of God's people from the Old and the New – representing the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles. And in verse 10, they "**fall down before Him who sits on the throne**," they "**worship**." And they do this almost continually, on a regular basis, over and over again. Some have suggested that they do this every time the four living creatures reveal some previously unknown attribute of God. So, as the four living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne, the elders fall down in worship. And as I understand it, this is the first of six times we read about this in Revelation – here, and then in Revelation 5:8 and 14, in Revelation 7:11, in Revelation 11:16, and in Revelation 19:4.

And here in Revelation 4:10, we also find that these twenty-four elders "**cast their crowns before the throne**." Last week, we learned that these men are wearing "**crowns**," and we learned that this is not the word for "diadem" (the crown of a ruler), but this is the word that was used to describe the crown of reward, the wreath

of olive branches that was given to those who won the ancient games. Only these are **"golden"** (according to verse 4). As I understand it, these are "Congrats, you've-made-it-to-heaven crowns." These crowns represent their reward. In scripture, the crown is not just for kings, but crowns are often used symbolically, to picture some kind of reward. In 2 Timothy 4:8, for example, Paul looks forward to receiving the **"...the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."** In James 1:12, James refers to **"...the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."** In 1 Peter 5:4, Peter writes to encourage elders, and he says that, **"...when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."** Earlier in this book, Jesus has John write to the church in Sardis, encouraging them to endure persecution, and he says, **"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."** The crown, then, seems to be the picture of a reward of some kind.

And here, these elders **"cast their crowns before the throne."** They realize: We are completely unworthy of this amazing gift! They realize: God, these crowns truly belong to You! In other words, they are not thinking of themselves at all here; but this is all about God. Even their reward means nothing compared to the amazing blessing of being able to see God face-to-face. And so, in this spontaneous act of worship, they cast their crowns before the throne, an act of humility. Those who are arrogant see no need to worship. When we understand who God really is, though, we come to his throne knowing that he is God and we are not. Because he is **"holy, holy, holy,"** we fall down before the throne in worship. Our rewards, all of our achievements, mean nothing in his presence.

Maybe you have a few trophies at home. Where do we put trophies as adults? I had mine in a box, and when we moved to Madison, when we built a house, I figured we might be here for a while, so I unpacked that box from my youth, and I put those plaques and those trophies in our laundry room. And sometimes I laugh. It's like a little shrine in there with the lint and the cobwebs, those old plaques and trophies from 4-H and high school and the county fair. I think of how we sometimes sing about the "old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame." We will "cherish the old rugged cross, 'till my trophies at last I lay down, I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it someday for a crown." We certainly give God the credit for everything we've done in this life, but in the life to come, even our God-given crowns we cast down before the throne. All glory and honor is given to God.

And I know, in a sense, this is still coming in the future for us. The elders have gone on before us. We aren't there yet. But in another sense, aren't we? Over in Ephesians 2, Paul refers to God, **"...being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** In a sense, then, right now, we are **"seated...with Him in the heavenly places."** In a sense, we, right now, have the ability to cast our crowns before the throne. So, the lesson in the first part of this passage is a reminder that worship is the response of a humble heart before the Lord. No matter who we are or what we have accomplished in this life, we fall down before the throne and lay our crowns at his feet. This is what we do.

Praise is not just physical, though, it is also verbal. They fall down, but they also say something. They put their thoughts into words. And this leads us to what comes next...

## II. ...as John also describes what he HEARS.

And what he hears is these elders praise God as the Creator of all things, ***“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.”*** So, they praise, and they give a reason for it. Notice: Twice in verse 11, the elders refer to God’s CREATION as being the reason for their praise, ***“for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”*** And this is a bit of a surprise. In Revelation, we might expect these elders to praise God for his “justice,” or for his “wrath,” or for his “retribution” on the Roman Empire. But that’s not the case at all. The elders praise God for his CREATION. Do we appreciate that? Do we appreciate the creation?

We are certainly reminded of the book of Job, perhaps written back during the days of Abraham. So long ago, Job questioned God, but instead of answering those arguments one by one, God (in Chapters 38-41) points to the creation and invites Job to consider the sea, and the light, and the snow, and the hail, and the rain, and the thunder and lightning, and the ice, and the frost, and the clouds, and the stars, and the lion, and the raven, and the mountain goats, and the deer, and the donkey, and the ox, and the ostrich, and the horse. Have we looked at a horse lately? I am not a horse person, but wow! What magnificent creatures – even today! I think of those horses used by the Madison Police Department to keep people safe downtown, to move large crowds of people without injury. I remember seeing an officer on horseback running radar over on South Badger Road. Horses are some amazing creatures! And in the book of Job, God keeps going: Job, look around you! The creation teaches some valuable lessons about the creative ability and the power of God. The creation itself calls us to worship.

*O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy hand hath made.  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the Universe displayed.  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

Everything around us points to God as our creator. And as our Creator, he is worthy of our praise. He is worthy to receive glory, and honor and power. Remember: These elders seem to be human beings. They have lived on this earth. They know. They have seen the creation. They are eyewitnesses. And yet, these men, with all that they had seen (living in the middle east), have they seen what we have seen today? Absolutely not! God made things that human beings would not discover for hundreds if not thousands of years. I think of my recent trip out west. I’m sure Job had seen some things, but I doubt he ever got to see the Rocky Mountains, the Grand Tetons, or the thermal springs of Yellowstone; he never got to see the Badlands of South Dakota or the waves crashing along the Oregon coast. Today, we have been to the moon, we are headed to Mars; of all people, we should be even more impressed than these elders. God has created everything, and we respond with praise.

As Paul said in Romans 1:20, ***“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”*** We look around us, and we see at least something of God in what God has done, in the creation. Unfortunately, some have decided to worship the creation instead of the Creator. But the creation itself is a reminder that God is amazing, that God is worthy of our worship.

Of course, as human beings, we think we can create things. And in a sense, we can. We are creative, like our Father in heaven. We are made in his image. But do we really “create” anything? In a sense, yes. But aren’t we

basically just rearranging what God has made for us? The greatest artist starts with a canvas made out of cotton, created by God and grown with the power of his sun, and wind, and rain. Those paints ultimately come from the minerals in the earth that God created. I think about the food we eat. In a sense, everything we eat is “all natural,” isn’t it? Nothing is purely “man made.” Right here, I’m looking at one of the most amazing of all of God’s creations, the Snickers bar. Everything in this beautiful piece of work came from God’s hand, didn’t it? Yes, it has been marvelously arranged by our fellow human beings, but doesn’t this also come from God? Several years ago, my dad concluded that because of the peanuts, this magnificent creation has some protein in it; therefore, Snickers must be good for diabetes. I like that way of thinking! But I hope you understand what I’m suggesting here: We think we are creative, and we are, but God is the Creator.

I took a few days this week to completely replace all of the trim around our garage door. After 21 years, it was rotting. Naturally, I needed a new saw from Harbor Freight, a sliding compound miter saw. And then I needed a nail gun. Obviously. I had to have the power to drive nails with air, which is awesome, by the way. And then I needed wood. Some came from Habitat, the rest came from Home Depot. Some of it came from Sweden. I have no idea how I ended up with wood from Sweden. But it all came together and turned out quite well. But did I “create” anything this week? Not like God did! I simply rearranged some of God’s raw materials. God created everything, from nothing, with no tools, and no help. According to Psalm 33:9, “**...He spoke, and it was done.**” And for this reason, God is worthy. He is our Creator.

This universe is not the result of billions of years of random chance. Life on this earth is not merely the result of millions of years of random mutations, and the death and destruction and extinction caused by natural selection. No, what we see around us today was designed by an intelligent being, far more intelligent and powerful than we are. He is our Creator. He created us with purpose and design. And for this reason, we worship.

### **Conclusion:**

Our goal this morning has been to follow John through that door that opens into heaven and to see God for who he really is. He is HOLY, and he is also our CREATOR. And I’m hoping that our study today has reminded us that even during difficult times, especially during difficult times, God is worthy of our worship. He deserves what we have to offer. And no matter what happens next – illness, death, inflation, supply chain disruptions, family stress, job stress, whatever it is – that knowing what’s going on behind the scenes in heaven right now will calm our hearts. No matter what happens, God is still on his throne.

And our response to knowing that God is on his throne is to fall down before him in worship, knowing that he is our Creator. Today, I know we sometimes have a gap or a buffer between ourselves and the natural world. We spend time indoors, we drive where we need to go, and so on. If I could make a suggestion based on what we’ve learned this morning: How about we do something to spend at least some time in nature this week? I love that we were able to get together as a church at Brigham County Park last week. What an awesome day! We did date night this week at Hoyt Park (off of Regent Street over on the near west side). It didn’t cost more than a normal date night, we just ate outside instead of inside. So, I don’t know what you might be able to do, but to appreciate God as our Creator, it might help to at least spend a few extra moments outdoors, in his creation – praising him for what he has done.

We will leave it here for today, and hopefully next week we can pick up with Chapter 5 as we continue looking at these songs or statements of praise in Revelation.

As we close our study, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

Thank you for allowing us into your throne room this morning. We are so thankful for the opportunity to learn more about you – not just as our Holy God, but also as our Creator. This morning, as we sing and as we pray, we join in on this praise that is happening continually. We praise you as the Great I Am. You have made us, and so we bring all of our accomplishments and any good thing we have ever done, and we offer all of these things before your throne in worship.

We come to you this morning in the name of your Son, Jesus, who left his throne in heaven to come to this earth to save us. Lord, come quickly. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)