

# Revelation 4–5 "God is on the Throne!"

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Preacher: Guest Speaker

[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

I'll ask you to turn to the last book of the Bible, to Revelation. No S on the end, by the way, please. Don't put an S on the end. The book of Revelation. And if you have your Bibles, you will be very helpful.

You will help because I'm going to go through chapters four and five. We didn't read five because it might have been a little bit long, but we need to go into five because you see Jesus in chapter five in a most wonderful way. This passage that we heard today, it follows three chapters at the beginning of Revelation that are letters to churches. And those churches are not perfect churches.

[ 1 : 55 ] In fact, they're called to repentance quite often. And everything from falling into the morality of the times to being lukewarm towards God, saying, you need to be zealous. You need to be hot towards God.

And calling them in grace to repentance. So you have the, you know, you have God speaking to us in earth, the things, the nitty gritty, the messiness of our church life. And then all of a sudden in chapter four, we actually see God reveal a glorious vision of himself. And I think Revelation and this chapter, as it's opening heaven to us, is like a wake-up call, a spiritual wake-up call for us. I was staying in a downtown hotel last night. And this morning I got up to take a much needed shower. And I went in and it was cold water. And I thought, it's going to get hot. I know it. So I actually went and walked around the room for a couple of minutes waiting for it to get hot. And I came back still cold.

So I made a decision. Do I do the cold plunge or do I come to Messiah Church looking pretty messy and dirty? I chose the cold plunge. And I tell you what, it is very, very clarifying.

I felt my mind clear. I felt very, very much awake and alive. There is something about cold plunges, I think. Now there's a good, there's a happy ending to the story is the water finally came. I guess it was the end of the hot water pipe for my room. And I had hot water at the end and stayed a little longer underneath there to thaw. So I'm glad I made it today. But I think that picture is what this chapter, these two chapters do for us spiritually. It is clarifying. It braces us. It invigorates us towards God. We see the reality of who God is in the midst of a world that has all kinds of powerful forces that are kind of swirling around us. We can lose sight of the reality. We can be sleepy towards the Lord Jesus. And so chapter four, I want you to turn there because we go from earth to heaven in this vision. And those words say, behold, a door standing open in heaven. Josiah read that very well because he was enthusiastic. There is a door opening in heaven. And the voice says, come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. Now it's important for us to know that heaven is opened.

It's not as though heaven is a long ways away. In the Bible, heaven is close to us. We cannot see heaven. It is as though there is a curtain kind of thing. But we are going along our life and all of

history alongside that curtain that is where heaven is behind that we cannot see. It is very close. Heaven can break into this world at a moment's notice. We are actually brought into heaven by the Lord Jesus as well into the very throne room of God. This is the gift of Jesus, our high priest. And so the reality of heaven surrounds us. And that is the thing that encompasses all of the great powers and forces in this world right now. Back in the 50s and 60s, there was a space race, as you remember, especially between the Soviet Union and the United States. And who were the first human beings in space? It was the

[ 5 : 56 ] Soviet cosmonauts. And famously, the first one came back and in Moscow did a press conference and said, we went up to heaven and we discovered that there is no God. Well, they misunderstood heaven, didn't they?

In fact, one wit said, well, if they had taken off their helmet and air tank, they would have seen God very, very quickly and very clearly as well. And that is the reality of heaven. Because what we're doing here is as we normally, as we look what we normally cannot see in this world, we are actually seeing spiritually the truth that surrounds us. Look at verse 2 in this wonderful chapter. Behold, here's what we see.

There stood in heaven a throne with one who is seated at the throne. If you don't remember any other verse, remember this one. Because this is the point of the sermon. There is a living being that occupies that throne. And look at verse 8. Who occupies the throne? It's not you. It's not me. It's not our prime minister. It's not a dictator. It's not the most powerful force in this world. It is the Lord God Almighty. That is who is on the throne. And we could try to put other people on it or other people could put themselves on it. But the truth is this verse. The Lord God Almighty is on the throne. And in verse 11, you see that he created the universe and actively rules all things. He decides what will happen in this world. And he hasn't given up on this world. He hasn't given up on this church that had all its problems that was being written to at the beginning of Revelation either. He hasn't disowned the people whose hearts are far away from him that are lukewarm. Instead, his will, which is good and perfect, is going to take place, is taking place in this world. And his good purposes will be accomplished.

So if you remember, one thing from this passage is this scene. God is on the throne. And I think for those first people who are reading this letter, it was tremendously important.

Because there were other thrones in their mind. They were living in a time where they were seeing the splendor of Greek and Roman achievement and power and religion. And that could very easily influence and even intimidate them as well. There was immense wealth in the Roman Empire.

[ 8 : 59 ] There was immense wealth associated with idol worship, that you could get money, the things that you wanted. Caesar's power was awesome. He ruled the known world as well. And he was worshipped.

And the Romans built, of course, beautiful cities and temples and statues that spoke to the glory of Rome. And of course, the Greek religions represented beautiful people. They were represented by beautiful people.

And they had the most impressive temples that were the wonders of the world. And that would amaze us today if we saw them intact and new. It's amazing when they're ruins.

My wife and I went to Athens for our honeymoon. And 25 years ago, exactly. And we saw the Parthenon dedicated to the goddess Athena.

It's beautiful. It's incredibly impressive, even though it's ruined. And you can imagine how it was to see it gleaming, white, new, golden, dominating the land for many miles.

[ 10 : 13 ] You know, from the world's perspective, the God of the Bible could not come close to comparing to that. It looked like that's what true glory was. And certainly for us here in the center of our nation's capital, here in Ottawa, we can be deeply impressed by political power.

And certainly the purse strings of a very wealthy country, when you consider the rest of the world, can do many wonderful things.

And it does give power as well. We can place great faith in institutions that are built to last, like universities and hospitals, successful corporations, businesses.

All of these are very, very good things. But our culture can be captivated by these strong and beautiful things.

Even by people, celebrities. Our culture worships as well. But this passage throws cold water on that as a wake-up call.

[ 11 : 21 ] There is much more to reality than this. None of this, these powerful things that we see, the beauty that we see in this world, can come close to the beauty of the power and the goodness of the God who sits on the throne, who is over all things.

That's why the next verses are given to us here. Look at verse 3. It says this one who occupied the throne had the appearance of Jasper and Carnelian.

These are two of the most precious and beautiful gems that were known at that time. And so there were symbols of the magnificent beauty of God.

His glory. And it's something that John couldn't describe, so he chose those gems as a symbol. And then he describes that around the throne there's a rainbow, which is the beautiful sign of God's mercy and his love for the world in his judgment, in promising not to destroy it, but instead that it would be redeemed.

This loving commitment to creation that he himself brought into being. And then there are these flashes of lightning as we come down here, the verses.

[ 12 : 39 ] There's rumblings and these peals of thunder. And that refers to the powerful and right judgment of the world that God himself will bring about.

That God's perfect and holy judgment is what comes at the end of human history and brings, as we're going to find later on, the new heaven and the new earth.

And all of that beauty, that mercy, that love, that perfect judgment, that glory, is reflected and magnified by a pure glassy sea, which we all sang about, around the glassy sea.

It's like a mirror that's reflecting that for us to see. And it's really interesting, the result of it. I want you to look further down here.

It says here that his beauty actually gathers creation around the throne. Look, the 24 elders with crowns are worshipping.

[ 13 : 49 ] And those 24 elders represent the 12 tribes of Israel, who were the people of God before Jesus. And they also represent the 12 apostles, which are the people of God that are redeemed by the Lord Jesus after his resurrection and ascension into heaven.

So they symbolize all the people of God throughout all ages. And they are gathered by God. Then you see the rest of creation.

And I want you to look at this picture here. This is something that maybe the kids should be drawing down in Sunday school as well. So if you look down here, it says that in verse 7, the first living creature looked like a lion.

And that is the strength of humanity. It's talking about the power that can be shown in creation. It talks about the nobility of the human life is what the lion was.

And then the ox. The ox is the one who focuses completely on just brute strength, the kind of power that can accomplish all kinds of things that can overcome.

[ 15 : 08 ] And then you have the picture of the third living creature is a face of a man. That is the wisdom of creation. Speaking about the wisdom of human accomplishment and learning and understanding.

And then the last is that of an eagle. It is the movement of humanity, of creation, the significance of it being in motion. And so you see that all of this creation, the fullness of creation, are saying together in verse 8 at the end, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come.

You know, in the communion service, we say that. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. And that is us joining the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

We are brought into heaven as we are singing and saying that song. This is what all of creation is being gathered to.

To enjoy God. To worship him. To glorify him forever as well. That is our great purpose. That is our great purpose.

[ 16 : 30 ] In a world that often has powerful rulers that are incredibly imperfect. And maybe today we have the best examples of imperfect leaders that we've had in quite some time.

How is power used? How is wisdom used? How is self-giving? How is the desire to see peace and the goodness in people?

How is that being carried out? You will never find the combination of who God is and all of his goodness and his glory and right judgment and love.

You will never find that on earth in the perfect, the perfection of what you are seeing in heaven. It can only be a very imperfect and grainy sort of reflection of the reality of who God is for us.

Look at verse 8. The perfectly holy and almighty God is on the throne. He always was. He is. He always will be. He surrounds time and all leaders and all powers.

[ 17 : 44 ] Which means only he could create the world and all that is in it. The most beautiful and powerful things that we can see or imagine in this world can't compare to the God who sits on the throne.

And so that's why creation gives thanks to God continually. You know, worthy are you, God, almighty, to receive glory and honor and power.

So I think this tells us something about ourselves is that the reality of life, of your life and the life of this world is that at the center of heaven is God himself gathering people to himself.

This gathering is a reflection of that as well. And the amazing thing is that God who is that powerful and glorious and created the world and sustains it, he personally has your purpose, the purpose of your life in his will and in his purpose as well.

Your deep purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Your creation, you being created, is the act of deep, deep love and kindness to you by God who created you to gather you to himself and to gather those outside Messiah church to God who loved them and created them as well.

[ 19 : 13 ] And this is the awesome truth. And this brings us to the last chapter, chapter 5, because the goodness of God is that he gathers us, but that goodness goes even deeper in chapter 5 in that not only does he create and sustain us for himself, but he also redeems all things as well.

He redeems all things. And that's what chapter 5 is all about. That word redemption is very, very important. It means that you are released from a slavery.

You are released from a bondage to sin and to death. And that you are brought into the freedom of a new life. And that freedom involves the Lord Jesus himself.

It is all about him. I want you to look at verse 5. John is deeply, deeply, deeply pained. He is weeping because nobody is there to open a scroll.

And he knows that scroll has everything to do with God's purposes for humanity. And in verse 5, God wipes away his tears. And the voice says to John, weep no more.

[ 20 : 33 ] Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered. And he can open this scroll. And John turns and he expects to see a powerful conquering figure like this lion of Judah.

But instead, what does he see in verse 6? He sees a lamb. Not just a lamb, but a lamb as though it had been slain.

With seven horns and seven eyes. Now, you can't draw that picture. If you tried to, it would be very, very difficult. I'd like to see what you came up with. And that's because those pictures of eyes and horns actually are speaking to the nature of the Lord Jesus.

The horns are a sign of power. And that seven is complete power. And the eyes are the sign of all-knowing as well.

So, you see, the weakness and sacrifice of the lamb, of the death of the lamb of Jesus, comes with absolute power and absolute knowledge.

[ 21 : 43 ] The God of all creation dies for us and for our salvation. In the slain lamb, the lamb who takes away the sins of the world. And that is the paradox of the gospel, isn't it?

That Jesus' weakness and his death means that he now rules with absolute power. And that turns the values of this world right upside down.

The hatred of man crucifies Jesus. But this means that God's love in his life is poured out on his people. And that the world is redeemed.

Look at, as we go down to verse 7. Jesus, they sing a new song. And this new song is about Jesus. You are worthy, they sing, because you were slain.

And by your blood you ransomed people. You freed them for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them a kingdom of priests to our God.

[ 22 : 45 ] And they shall reign on earth. Now, brothers and sisters, this is why God frees us. A kingdom that represents God to the world.

And who you are praying to God for as well. That's what a priest does. The more a slave was worth, the more money you would pay for the redemption and freedom.

Here we see that you are so precious. That individuals in the world are so precious that the beloved son of God, God himself, dies.

He is given as a gift for you. And your salvation and your freedom. We see how utterly precious we are to God. He knows that our greatest good is to free us from death and bring us to the life of heaven.

And out of love, he accomplishes it in Jesus. So in closing, the way of renewal for us, the way for us to be waking up to God, is very simply to abandon yourself to really heart, mind, and soul.

[ 23 : 55 ] To abandon yourself to this truth that you are precious to God by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ dying for us. And then Jesus is worthy of your worship.

He is the one who is meant to be on the throne over your life. That is in that that you find real life. A life that is ruled by Jesus, who loves you, who is doing this powerful work within you to change you to be like him, and who gives you grace to be lights to the world.

You know, this is so important to us because we are very easily drawn back into slavery that we are ransomed from. We are like the Hebrews who wanted to go back to Egypt where it was warm and secure, but where they are enslaved.

They are enslaved. Many things can displace our affection for Jesus. And we can be intimidated by rulers and by forces in this world.

But these chapters are meant to reorient me and refocus you as well, our whole life, by showing us what real life is like in relation to Jesus, who is utterly worthy of our worship and our praise and living our life for as well.

[ 25 : 22 ] We will always have that temptation to place our affections on other things, but this remarkable scene that ends the chapter gives us reality. And we leave this chapter with it.

Look down at verse 12. Verse 12 says, Worthy is... Whoops, I've got to turn over to it.

Verse 12 says, To him who... I can't read this very well, so it's actually 13, isn't it? We jump down to 13. It says, To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

You see what happens here? Jesus is joining God the Father on the throne. He is God himself as well. And all that worship goes to the Lamb and to God the Father.

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and glory and might forever and ever. Amen. That's our wake-up call.

[ 26 : 24 ] It's the reality that surrounds us in every aspect of our life. On this Trinity Sunday, may God the Holy Spirit fill and strengthen you so that you see every day that Jesus is worthy of your worship and that he strengthens you to glorify him in your life and that he strengthens you by the hope of heaven where you all will be.

That your identity is completely bound up in the one who has loved you, died for you, created you, created you, and redeemed you as his own forever.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth, wisdom and might, and honor and glory and blessing forever and ever. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.