

PM Revelation 4

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[0 : 0 0] After this I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven and the first voice which I heard speaking to me like a trumpet said come up here and I will show you what must take place after this at once I was in the spirit and behold a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne and he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald around the throne were 24 thrones and seated on the thrones were 24 elders clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads from the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like crystal and around the throne on each side of the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind the first living creature like a lion the second living creature like an ox the third living creature with the face of a man and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight and the four living creatures each of them with six wings are full of eyes all around and within and day at night they never cease to say holy holy holy holy is the lord god almighty who was and is and is to come and whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne to him who is seated on the throne who lives forever and ever the castor crowns before the throne saying worthy are you our lord and god to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they existed and were created amen and may the lord bless to us that reading of his own holy inspired word this morning as part of the communion service we were looking at luke chapter 15 and the unworthy son who chose to leave who then chose to return and whom the father chose to love in that amazing gracious way unworthy he was and yet he was loved by god the father that's the way that's the way that's the way that's the way that's the way it is for all who come to christ jesus whatever prostitutes or publicans or tax collectors or sinners they are unworthy they remain and yet they are received by this amazing father who looked for them loved them welcomed them assured them in so many ways and we saw that the reason why that was possible was because of what we were remembering at the lord's table the death of jesus is what makes it possible for there to be joy in the presence

of god and in god himself when sinners repent without the death it makes no sense without the death of jesus the parables make no sense the stories don't have a meaning but with the death of jesus everything makes sense tonight i want us to look not at the unworthiness of the christian but the worthiness of god and that's why we read revelation chapter 4 and you can see it verse 11 for example worthy are you our lord and god to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they existed and were created we want to look at the whole of this chapter in some measure but in particular the reason for the worthiness of god who is this god he's the god of the bible what's the opening words of the bible in the beginning god and what do you find in the book of the revelation god speaks twice and when he speaks he says these words twice i am the alpha and the omega i am the alpha and the omega and that tells you this whole wonderful book is bracketed by god at the beginning and god at the end it's a book essentially about god it's not a book about us it's not a book about science it's not a book about creation it's not a book about psychology it's not a book even about the church it's a book about god from beginning to end what's he like what does he do and what does he expect from us the scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning god and what duty god requires of man the god of the bible but this god is a god who can be known beautifully known and even in the book of the revelation which many people think of as a closed book it's a wonderfully open book because it's not abstract it's a book that is beautifully thoughtfully given to us by the lord through jesus christ through the angel through john to give to the church not only those who suffer in the first century but in every century since this is a god who can be known why does god for example tell us that he's alpha and omega he doesn't tell

us he's alpha and omega for himself he says i am alpha and omega for you and that tells you the focus of this book it's about god but it's about what god is for us i have a beginning i have an end you might say but god he brings things into the beginning he's there all the way through to the conclusion

i am alpha and omega that's just one example where god says things that are for us to benefit from the god of the bible the god who can be known the god who is worshipped reading the book of the revelation you can't get away from this this god is to be worshipped in fact he's never it seems unworshipped there's always someone worshipping the god whom we find revealed in scripture and why is he always worshipped because he is always worthy there's a sense even before the world was brought into being when there was only father son and holy spirit even they looked on one another and saw the worthiness of one another and loved one another and were willing to be in the presence of one another in that blessed unity and then once the world was created and the angels were created and man was created there was always worship that continues why is god worshipped because he is worthy worthy are you our lord and god to receive glory and honour and power in this chapter there's a focus on three groups two groups and one being the first focus is on the church who worships you'll notice the way they are described there on and around the throne of god there's throne in heaven in verse 4 around the throne were 24 thrones seated on the thrones were 24 elders clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads 24 which we assume is symbolic for 12 tribes as it were of the old testament 12 apostles in the new the church the entire church old testament and new testament and what's their posture it is one of worship they themselves are crowned they are seated on thrones as it were and they are there encircling the throne of god and they delight in the throne of god they delight in the reign of god they delight in the crown of god they're not seated around god's throne and thinking this feels strange this feels out of place i don't belong here no no this is where the church belongs seated around the throne of god no matter no matter what power they have no matter what thrones they themselves are on no matter what crowns they have they are always supremely taken up with the throne of god himself if we were looking in paul's language in ephesians 1 the church has been raised up to the heavenly places they've been seated there in the heavenly places they are there at the right hand of the most high they are there so close to him and they don't feel out of place you don't read paul in ephesians 1 saying ah the church feels so uncomfortable in the heavenly places not for a moment that's where they now belong and that's the beautiful thing about the church of jesus christ we belong around god we belong in the posture of worship around the throne of god and we should never allow the devil to tempt us to think otherwise unworthy as we are prodigal sons as we are we've returned to the father and we belong to the father satan wants you to think of yourself even at that point so close to the father still a hired servant not at all you are crowned you're enthroned but you're around his supreme throne so the church worships god god's people secondly the angels worship representing god's world these these i think are described for us in the middle of verse six there around the throne on each side of the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind in my understanding these are angelic beings and they are angelic beings who have been given the gift to rule in the creation that god created and that's why you'll find some of them have respect to the lion the first living creature was like a lion the second like an ox the third one the face like a man and the fourth like a creature like an eagle in flight here are angelic beings created by god these angels and they're appointed to live and they're appointed to rule and they're appointed to see and they can see on all sides in front and behind just as you find in isegis six perhaps or in ezekiel chapter one these angelic beings are appointed to rule that's their function they rule but they rule they minister for the benefit of the saints for the glory of god but they are not just appointed to rule they're also appointed to worship see that's the thing the church worships god because they have been redeemed and created the angels worship god these are the unfallen angels they have been created by god and they owe him worship they've been appointed to rule by god and they give him worship on account of that they are the cherubim they are the seraphim and they come across here as those who delight to worship the four living creatures in verse eight each of them with six wings full of eyes all around and within day and night they never cease to say holy holy holy is the lord god almighty who was and is and is to come these aren't the words of the church these are the words of these angelic beings who are appointed to rule and here they worship they delight in worship more than that they don't just delight in their own worship of god they delight in encouraging the worship of god with others

they want god's people to worship that's why you find in verse nine whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne who lives forever and ever the 24 elders fall down before him who are seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever see what happens these living creatures give the creator worship and once they do so then the church delights to join in and they worship him who lives forever and ever the angels they stand the church they fall down and worship so you've got the church god's people the angels in a sense representing god's world and god's rule the third being is the sevenfold spirit see in verse 5 from the throne came flashes of lightning rumblings and peals of thunder and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of god seven burning torches of fire and they are the seven spirits of god we know from revelation one that the seven spirits is a reference to the holy spirit seven remember there are seven churches in revelation two and three and the spirit of god represents the church of god in the presence of god bringing the needs of the church to the presence of god god in his holiness and here's the holy spirit seven burning torches of fire holiness at the very heart of the holy spirit and he is one that is able to see all that goes on and he also is the one that brings worship to god he brings not just blunt worship he brings understanding meticulous careful understanding of worship we don't have time to explore that but god's people god's angels and god's spirit that is the picture around the throne of god but why worship because he is worthy if the prodigal son thought of himself rightly and he was so right i am not worthy to be called your son make me one of your hired servants he will always be known as the one who is unworthy even after he's been clothed even after he's had the ring put on his finger the sandals put on his feet the celebration around the fattened calf even though all of that has taken place and the father says you are my son you are dead you are now alive you are lost and you're found still that son will know that he's unworthy that's what grace does and you never grow out of that sense of unworthiness and you should never desire to grow out

[20 : 10] of that sense of unworthiness it's a good place to be in to know that you need the grace and the love the unmerited love and favour of God you never graduate to another class where oh I used to be unworthy but now I've been a Christian so long and I know God just delights in me for who I am not at all you are always by default unworthy but you are a sinner forgiven redeemed set apart in Christ you are unworthy so don't stop thinking of yourself as unworthy on the other hand don't just stop there think about the worthiness of God in Revelation 4 and the worthiness of the lamb in Revelation 5 tonight let's look at the worthiness of this amazing

God let's just look at some of the things that are mentioned the church the angels the spirit what's the focus first of all I think it's on the holiness of God day and night they never cease to say holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty what is holiness holiness is what makes God God holiness is the uniqueness of God they say the partness of God the one of a kindness of God there's no one else in his class he is the excellent one the perfect one he is God and he is not man he is holy and that holiness affects everything else that there is to say about

God so he's not just holy in himself he's holy in everything that is true about himself let's look at some of these things verse 9 whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who's seated on the throne verse 11 worthy are you our Lord and God to receive glory honour and power he's worthy to receive glory glory glory is the great word about impressiveness impressiveness glory is to do with weight you take a stone drop it on the sand it leaves its mark on the sand it does weight it makes an impression God is impressive and he makes an impression he's glorious and he reveals his glory in such a way that is unforgettable and if there's anything about the book of the revelation that you need to remember it's that

God is holy and he's holy in his glory he is at the centre of the universe no one else there is no one close to God in impressiveness no human emperor no pope of the church no pastor of a church no group of people no angels or archangels he is the only one who is to receive glory glory can be ascribed to him and it's a strange thing when you say but can you be a wee bit more precise about what makes them impressive well we could if we were dealing with other parts of scripture but here you've got this beautiful symbolic language so when when you're there in heaven a throne stood in heaven one seated on the throne and he had the appearance of jasper carnelian around the throne was a rainbow that the appearance of an emerald world

I mean here you've got precious stones red diamond clarity and emerald green followed by the rainbow in other words the writer the speaker is not here trying to describe the glory of God in theological depths he's saying the glory of God when you see his appearance when you see how

he's revealed himself he is so attractive he is so beautiful in red in diamond clarity in emerald green and the rainbow surrounds him none of that is to be taken in any other way than he is beautiful in holiness and in glory he is so so attractive even the sea of crystal in verse 6 before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like crystal here's

[26 : 09] God in his glory seated on the throne is there anything troubling is it possible that the forces of hell and the ungodly forces of darkness are somehow encroaching upon the throne of God when I sometimes look out of my window in Thurshoe looking down onto Scrapster Bay there you find the waves quite rough at times a lot of movement there's a lot of force but here the picture is in heaven as it were there's God on his throne and the sea before him is calm as calm can be like crystal like glass absolutely unperturbed not troubled so anytime you look around your own life and your own church and your own difficulties and you feel as if the forces are threatening you wave upon wave coming upon you and you think how can we be able to cope and sometimes you may just be thinking

God's like I am he may be as close to the end of his tether maybe he also is drawing near the line and maybe he's at the point where he likewise can't cope not for a moment when you are feeling in that depth of the waves pounding remember he is on the throne and the sea is like glass around him do you remember Exodus chapter 15 there was Pharaoh's army coming against the Israelites sure to defeat them not for a moment God dealt with them and then the sea became like a camp just calm just like the rainbow after the flood God's not threatened in any way by any of these things his majesty is not threatened his mercy is not threatened he is totally in control and you know that's the glory of God and that's what we need to remember in the 21st century as

Christians living facing such trials and seeking to plant churches and godly places we need to remember the glory of God he's beautiful he's attractive and he is not troubled he's not at the end of his tether he's holy he's glorious honour worthy are you our lord and god to receive glory and honour honour this is talking about stature and there's no comparison in the book of the revelation no one else receives honour but God you may be looking at other parts of Paul in literature and believers are honoured by God but they can only be honoured by

God because he has all honour and nobody is honoured by God to the detriment of God's honour you'll see for example there's the church the 24 elders in verse 10 the 24 elders they fall down before him who is seated on the throne they worship him who lives forever and ever and what do they do with their crowns I mean you might have thought there's the church crowned and you sometimes think the church in the 21st century likes to think of their own greatness they're crowned after all but here's the picture that matters their crowns come off and they throw their crowns before the throne because in the presence of him he is the only one to be honoured and we need to spend time in prayer taking our crowns off taking our crowns off and reminding ourselves he is the only one who is to be honoured we are unprofitable servants at best we need to come back to that the Christian church is not about boosting people's confidence their self confidence their self awareness it's very much about coming into the presence of God who has all honour in comparison to him we really have to cast their crowns down holy glory honour power power see in verse 8 there day and night they never cease to say holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty literally it's Lord God Pantocrator almighty he's the Lord he's God and he has all the strength that there is

[32 : 31] Pantocrator one of the most lovely Greek words his power is not limited his power is unrivaled doesn't matter which season in history you live in his power remains the same he's never weak he is always the almighty he's always the Pantocrator Satan would have you think well today he may be the Pantocrator but tomorrow in my situation facing my diagnosis facing the troubles in my church there's no way that I can think of God as the one who is almighty he is though Rome in the first century was mighty and she may even have thought of herself as almighty ready to crush the church not for a moment people have been telling me today about the

Iranians who were baptized and the underground churches that they were a part of now no longer in existence because the persecution and death how sad and yet yet you have to remember the Lord God almighty has been with the church in even worse situations than that which exists in Iran and North Korea and the Middle East and in Nigerian fundamentalist areas he's not weak he's not weak holy glory honour power eternity eternity do you notice that whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne who lives forever and ever so here are the angels and they're viewing

God as one who lives forever and ever the 24 elders then were told seated on the throne worship him who lives forever and ever the eternity of God he lives and will never die he will never cease he'll never deplete he will never wind down he lives forever and ever none of these angels will be looking at God on the throne and say well he's been on the go for a while now he's going to wind down shortly none of the 24 elders the church of Jesus Christ old and new testament they're not going to look at the throne of God and say well see that God he's been there he lived and he lives now but he's not going to live forever the book of the revelation says over and over again if we have time to show it he lives and he lives forever and ever and he will never cease the eternity of God and it's for that reason you see that thanksgiving comes into play they give thanks to him who lives forever and ever you know there's lots of things we thank

God for but when did you last thank him for his eternal nature that he lives forever and ever I may live forever and ever but only if he lives forever and ever he is to be given thanks for his eternal nature holy glory honour power eternity he's worthy of praise and then he is or he was and is and is to come that's what the living creatures say holy holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come this is the interpretation of

I am in the book of Exodus this is the interpretation of the I am sayings in the book of John he was he is and he is to come when God describes himself as the one who was and is and is to come think of this he is today he was yesterday and he's on the way for tomorrow he is today and you and I might look at our lives and think of all the difficulties and the trying times and the awful situations that the church faces and you think if God is here how can that be happening the book of the Revelation says let me assure you he is

[38 : 39] God says I am but he also says I was in other words what came before today all the situations leading up to today are no accident they were not outside the control of God no no he was and is so all the yesterdays God was in control of them bringing us to today and then he's on the way literally he is the one coming literally he's the present part he's on the way he's coming he's not lost control he's got it all in hand you might think surely if he doesn't come now then things will never get better listen you and

I have had to learn over and over again that our now doesn't match God's now there are times when we think if it doesn't happen now then we're finished and then we've had to realize oh no God didn't reveal his power at that moment he did it later yes my now my urgent cry is not always met by God's agreement yes I'll come now no there are times when God says no I brought you here I'm the God of yesterday I'm with you now I am and I am on the way I'm on the way he doesn't tell you much more than that he doesn't give you a diary of what is to come not even the book of the revelation what he gives you is a pattern of things to come and at the heart of that pattern is I am on the way I am on the way he is he was and he is to come that's the name of the Lord what god do you worship the I am well this is the I am he's the same yesterday today and forever and finally holy glory honour power eternity the one who is and was and is to come is the creator god worthy are you lord our god to receive glory and honour and power why well you created all things and by your will they existed and were created see that's one thing that the angels and the church have in common they were created by the same god not on the same day not in the same time but the angels look at god and they address him my creator our creator and the church of Jesus Christ at least representing humanity look at god and say my creator our creator see he's worthy of all these things because he's the creator what does a creator do a creator doesn't just think god is not all about concepts the creator makes the creator creates the creator judges the creator saves this is where the power of the eternal god comes into play because he is the creator there are times when god can create out of something just like he created man out of the pre existing dust of the earth there are other times when he can create out of absolutely nothing he is the creator you and I look for something and if we see something we say well god can work with that and when we don't see anything we attempt to say it's finished god can't work with nothing but he's the creator he created all things in the space of six days very good he can create out of nothing this is the creator you created all things there's nothing in the universe but that which has been created by god he's the faithful creator he's the god of Adam but he's also the god of Noah he's the god of judgment and he's the god who brings the rainbow he's the god who tells you I can save and he's the god who tells you I can judge and he can tell you again I will save and I will judge you see who is your god your god is the creator and if it's the creator can you see the possibilities can you see the opportunities I sometimes get worried when when I think of maybe locals committees in the local

church or committees in their national church and they're gathered around and they look at budgets and they look at figures and they say what can be done sometimes i just want to thunder and say are you remembering he is the creator he's the creator and if he's the creator the possibilities are absolutely stupendous he created this heavens and earth he's going to create a new heaven a new earth in which only righteousness will dwell and you know what it won't be hard for god easy easy he just has to speak and will it into being and it happens i do fear that satan and the world are crushing around us and reshaping our idea of god we don't hear the creator mentioned much on our news programs we don't hear the creator mentioned much in our schools we don't even talk as Christians about the creator as much as we should but the book of the revelation says you are worthy for all these reasons but because you created all things by your will they existed by your will they are created there's a sense in which you see Christianity is defined by creation and creation leads to worship do you sometimes worry that the lack of authentic worship in the church is because we've lost sight of our need of the creator god after all we've got it all under control have we not we've got the technology we've got our own wizardry we're able to do so much the creator whatever he was it's in the past no no our worship needs to be reminded of the creatorship of god he is the creator now you might say to me well surely it's more important to remember god as savior and i'll reply to you my creator is my savior my creator is the one who saves my creator is my redeemer let's not forget then these beautiful things which we have just glanced at in brief and give god the praise of which he is worthy we are unworthy of course we are but this is the god who has chosen to save us are you comfortable around this god are you at home in the presence of this god like the 24 elders around the throne there's a sense in which you're unworthy and there's another sense in which i belong here i belong nowhere else than here you are worthy at what stage of life would it be improper to say you are worthy to god there's no time let's pray our heavenly father we ask that you would all bring us to that place where we believe what we preach when we believe what we hear from your word oh may your holy spirit bring these truths home may they shape our lives our thoughts may they deal with our anxieties may they shape our prayers may they shape our service may they shape how we face the demonic around us and the various enemies that crowd in their own threatening way lord oh remind us

[50 : 41] of who you are in the midst of it all and we will we trust give you the glory that you are due in jesus we ask it amen let's and know to well shall bevere are good