

The Throne and the Lamb

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- [0 : 00] O Lord, how great Thou art! May You continue to display Your manifest greatness.
- More importantly, may we recognize it and sing of it and be in awe of it and worship You, O Lord. May You open our ears, give power to Your truth as Your name is proclaimed.
- We ask these things in Your most great and glorious name. Amen. Please make sure you have your Bibles open to Revelations 4 and Chapter 5. If you were with us last week, you know I ended last week's sermon with that reading.
- Today, I want to spend some time in this passage so that we can understand it because this is kind of the prism center to understand everything that comes after this.
- This is the center of the truth. This is the center of the power of God. As we look at the throne room and who is worthy to open the scrolls.
- [1 : 23] After this, we're going to be moving a lot quicker through the text as we seek to understand the structure, the forest, as it were, of the entire book of Revelation.
- So please have it open to Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. As you know, one of the points that I brought up last week is the threefold division that we find in Revelation, which John reveals to us in Revelation 119 with the command that Jesus gives him.
- He says, He says, He says,
- Chapter 4 in this text that make it very clear to us that there is a future message involved.
- Now, when I say future, I'm speaking from the time of John, not our future. It could be, but that doesn't mean in some people's understanding that some of what we are going to read in the next couple of weeks has already been taking place in our past, which would have been John's future.
- [3 : 31] But I don't want to get hung up on that. But from that time that John is speaking, they were to come. Now, when we get into this, we're going to read that there's a lot of imagery, there's a lot of symbolism.
- And I was listening to a pretty well-known preacher by the name of Alistair Begg this week, and he made some really important points on this passage that I thought was especially relevant to share with you.
- And it was kind of this advice that, although I've made this point, he makes it so much better. And what's interesting is, as you all know, we're going to get into these incredible descriptions that John uses.
- He's going to be invited into the inner sanctum of heaven, the throne room. And he uses a lot of colorful language. He's describing rainbow and jewels and crystals.
- And we believe that John is doing his very best to describe what he's seeing. And when it comes to interpreting these texts, and I believe this is what confuses most people when they come to Revelation.
- [4 : 52] Start with what is clear. Start with what you know when you read the text. When you begin with the unclear or the guesswork of massive interpretation, and you allow that to drive what is clear, it can get really confusing.

So what you want to do is you want to write out when you're going through the interpretation of your own study of Revelation, write what's clear and true.

As we're going to see, there is a throne. The throne is at the center of chapter 4. That's the thing we know that is true.

And there's a lot of other descriptive elements. There's symbolism, which is important. But the important aspect is the throne. Likewise, in chapter 5, it's the lamb.

It's the lamb. And although there's other uses of descriptions that are going around that, the lamb has to drive the other descriptors.

[6 : 04] I hope I'm clear on this, but that's one of the problems when we come to this. How do we, what are we supposed to focus on? I think if we focus on what is clear, what is in plain sight, we make sense of this.

And we are obviously blessed by reading this. Sometimes there is more color when we understand some of the greater symbolism, but that doesn't mean we can't understand the main message behind the text.

And one of the ways to understand the main message in the text, and Alistair Begg brought this up beautifully, is he says, who was this book written to?

Was it written to a group of first century Christians which were being openly persecuted for their faith?

Or was it written to a bunch of prophecy advocates, several thousand, or he calls them armchair prophecy experts, that exist 2,000 years later?

[7 : 21] And we have to kind of, yes, there's going to be some important, I'm not taking away from any of the symbolism or the greater color that's added to the text.

But how would that first century Christian read this text as he would go through? Sometimes he's going to recognize some of the Old Testament imagery, but for the most part, to try to figure out every single nuance of the text, I'm not so sure.

The purpose of the text is to expose Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is not a prophecy puzzle magazine in which we are to read the current events of the day and see where they fit in.

The whole idea of prophecy is once we have lived through it, we can point back to it and see the hand of God in it.

So it was quite interesting, and I'll give you a quick understanding of what I'm talking about, a quick explanation. How many of you here lived in the 80s?

[8 : 41] All right, as many people know, they say the people who lived through the 50s and 60s were the greatest generation. But if you happen to live through the 80s, you lived through the coolest generation. Okay?

There's no argument with this. So, back in the late 80s, there was several books that were massive bestsellers.

The coming of Christ was all over the place. And the reason why is if you went to the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, which I read to you several weeks ago, Jesus Christ said the following, and I'm going to read the text, and I'm going to show you how prophecy experts read the text, which is, I'm not sure how the first century Jews or the church, the Christians, were reading the text.

It says, Matthew 24, 32, it says, From the fig tree learns its lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.

Now, as you all know, the Jews rejected Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ then took, as we see in the Acts and through the apostles, the message to the whole world.

[10 : 04] So, the fig tree in that imagery is Israel. They had rejected Christ. But it says, They became tender and put out its leaves.

Prophecy experts will tell you that is when Israel becomes a nation. They're kind of seeking God more or whatnot. I don't know. I'm not talking about what is true spiritually, but what happened in our time.

So, in 1948, Israel becomes a nation. So, then they read verse 33. See, also, when you see all these things, which they interpreted as Israel becoming a nation, you know that he is near at the very gates.

So, those that are looking for the coming of Jesus are looking for that first sign. They see Israel becoming tender. Israel becoming a nation. All right. That's one of the first benchmarks we look for.

So, then, how near is Jesus? So, they turn to verse 34. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

[11 : 14] So, they take that term generation. And biblically, understanding of a generation is 40 years. So, they take Israel, which became a nation in 1948.

At 40 years, you get to 1988, and you have best-selling books preaching that Jesus Christ is near.

What's interesting about those books is they're no longer bestsellers today. Right? For obvious reasons.

My point is, I don't believe those first century Christians were doing this type of analysis while they're under persecution.

They're reading these pages, and they're being encouraged because they're seeing almost as if this is the fifth gospel, the entire revealing of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 25] So, I hope you're still with me on this, but that's how I want us to approach this text.

I don't want to approach it from a presupposed historical or biblical view, and I mean when I say biblical view, view of end times.

That's not the way I want us to look at it. I want us to look at it as if you're a first century Christian. You're under fire, and how would you read and understand this text?

I think if we can get our minds around that, that's going to help us going forward. All right? So, let's look at chapter 4, starting in verse 1.

So, this is John. He says, After this I looked. So, Jesus Christ has given him a word to the church. He's written it down. What Jesus said, if you have a red letter Bible, you'll notice that chapter 2 and 3 are full of red ink or red print because that was the words of Jesus Christ to those churches.

[13 : 38] So, after this he says, I look and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the voice, and this is the voice of Jesus, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet.

It's a very clear sounding voice, said, Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this. So, again, we have that separation.

And John records, At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne.

As one, the point that I just made, we're getting into what is that John's first notice about where he's being taken into?

This throne. And it was this throne, and also he notices with one seated on the throne. And the reality is we do not have to do a lot of guesswork about who's on the throne.

[14 : 46] In fact, there are other visions in Scripture that have the same view. We had 1 Kings 22, 19, very little known prophet named Mycenaee had this vision of the throne room.

The prophet Ezekiel had the same vision with incredible. And he uses different descriptors, but what he was saying, there was all these amazing things that were going on in the throne room.

And of course, probably one of the best and most well-known visions of the throne room is in Isaiah 6. One, it says, In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

And that imagery there, the temple, was all of everywhere that God ruled. And that train meant his sovereignty was everywhere.

And above him stood the seraphim, which we believe are types of angels, each had six wings. With two, he covered his face, and two, he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

[16:07] And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. And the whole earth is full of his glory.

So that is Isaiah's view of the spectacle. Now we have John's view of the spectacle. Verse 3, 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. And I want you to pay attention to the word behold.

That's an incredible word. It's like, it's amazing. It's incredible. Behold! These are, these massive, he's taken in all this imagery that is before him.

And note the words that he uses. He doesn't say, who sat there had jasper and carnelian, and there was a rainbow made of emerald.

[17:12] That's not what the text says. The text says it had the appearance of. So John is writing this in the words that he knows that describe.

Now, there's reasons we can point to the Old Testament. What is the significant of some of those jewels? But that's not important for the point that we're going to see here.

And we meet two types of creatures. Verse 4, Around the throne were 24 thrones. And seated on the throne were 24 elders, clothed in white garments with golden thrones, golden crowns on their heads.

Obvious. Who are the elders? There's people who speculate that it's angels. I don't believe it's angels because we never see angels sitting in thrones or wearing crowns.

But the debate that is, is they're pure. That means they've been washed by the blood of Jesus. I believe they are saints, whether they're Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, saints that are raptured, doesn't matter.

[18:22] These are people who were once flesh and blood who are now in heaven worshiping God. And it says, from the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and pearls 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.

This is, as one author says, the throne room of all throne rooms. It is beyond description. What's amazing is the one thing that John does not describe is the indescribable one who sits on the throne.

For who could even describe God? Yet he describes the elders and as we're going to see in a second he's going to describe these other creatures that are around the throne.

He's going to describe the colors that he sees. But not the one who sits on the throne. Continuing verse seven or verse six and around the throne on each side of the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

[20 : 00] 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 all day and night.

They never cease to say when I get to that. So when you are a first century believer and you are reading this you are discouraged you are hurting perhaps you are doubting.

What are you thinking when you're reading this? What types of angel are those? Hey Bill what do you think? You think they're the seraphim or the other angels that were described in Isaiah the cherubim.

I don't know. Hey John what do you think? And I'm talking about Johnny Junior over there. Are these the saints from the Old Testament like what do you think what do you think the significance is?

I really don't believe that kind of argument is going on. I believe their minds might be pointed towards some of the Old Testament truths but what they do know that is absolutely crystal clear is that the elders with golden crowns these four incredible beings have one thing in common.

[21 : 31] They all worship the one on the throne. That is the categorically undeniable truth of this passage.

The most amazing things that you could see in this world this incredible throne and they are all worshipping the one on the throne.

And what do they say? Holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is to come. And John tells us and whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne again no description who lives forever and ever the 24 elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.

They cast their 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.

Again think of that first century persecuted believer. The truth that you are taking away from this is God still sits on the throne.

[23 : 13] God is still worshipped even in heavens even by these incredibly powerful beings.

These elders are described as rulers who have their own thrones who have their own golden crowns take off their crowns and give it to the one who deserves all worship.

You understand that as a first century believer that God still rules he is still sovereign he is still worshipped by the most incredible beings that one man could ever see and he's very much worthy of our worship as well.

if the pure powerful beings in heaven worship him who have we're going to look at that idea of those eyes that see everywhere that's perfect knowledge perfect sight perfect understanding sometimes people don't worship God because they don't see him they don't understand him they don't have full knowledge to believe those that are in heaven have no doubt there is no question of who sits on the throne and they give him full worship so when we ask the question does

God care that I'm going through a tough time when we lament God do you hear my cries do you hear my prayers the question do you still rule the resounding answer is yes and even though I do not understand what is before me even though I do not have perfect view perfect understanding God is still do every ounce of worship from me what John is telling these first century believers in us here quite clearly is that God still rules he is still sovereign over all things and that the injustice we see the unrighteousness we see the evil that we see whether it's done to us or others

[26 : 24] God sees it too and God is now going to tell us what he's going to do about it so going forth in revelation and even when we think of future times we need to understand that God still absolutely rules he is absolutely sovereign there are no accidents God is still worthy of all our worship so when we go forth that's what the throne room is telling us God is still sovereign let's go to chapter five now this is where the action begins to take place and the action starts by

John saying then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals and no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it and one of the elders said to me weep behold the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David has conquered so that he can open the scroll in its seven seals so on this incredible throne sits the one who is worthy of all our worship and he holds out this scroll and the scroll is actually the deed to earth and if you remember your classic history and antiquities or what not back in the day they would have a scroll and they would put a wax seal and the king would put his ring on it to or an official and you had to be an official to rightfully open that scroll so the one who can open that scroll must be the one who has the right to that scroll who owns that deed as we will see as we will soon find out those seven seals are seven judgments on the earth which

God is sovereign over which God continues to rule over and which he has rightfully given over to his son Jesus Christ that there is no one as John writes who can redeem or as he's told to redeem this world except for the one Jesus Christ it's interesting when Jesus Christ first came he came in humble circumstance as a child the people who cried out for a Messiah missed him in their very midst and now the Jesus who will come as we read last week will come in all glory and all power and it will be unmistakable as to who he is for Jesus is the rightful one the rightful king he's the one with the righteous right and power to destroy his enemies verse six and between the throne and the four living creatures among the elders

I saw a lamb standing and though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne and we had taken the scroll the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the lamb each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints lay would trep of live in their home. And on that day, they would slay the lamb and take the blood and wipe it over their door. So God's angel of death would pass over them. The lamb provided redemption, salvation to them. But what's interesting is this lamb is no ordinary lamb.

One, we see that it's standing. It is alive. It's on its feet. Yet it looks like it was slain and the scars were even visible. But it's interesting, he uses this word seven, the number.

[32 : 56] And I'll explain this imagery to you. We read the seven horns and the seven eyes. That means perfect power. Horns represent power. Eyes, knowledge, sight. Just as it says, the Holy Spirit goes out everywhere. Perfect understanding, perfect knowledge. This is the lamb. So when we begin to read, and we're going to be reading horrible things that are going to happen in this world when Jesus Christ comes again to execute his judgment, he does so not only with perfect power, but he does so with perfect knowledge, perfect righteousness.

There are no mistakes that are going to be made by God. And although some of these things might insult our sentiments, they are perfectly right in the eyes of God because he knows all, sees all, and has all power.

And the earth is rightfully his. So here we meet the worthy one who has come to rightfully take back the earth for himself.

And how did the people in heaven respond that John witnessed? And it says, And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals.

For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God. From every tribe and language and people and nation, you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.

[35 : 11] John continues in verse 11, Then I looked and heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

And the four living creatures said amen and the elders fell down and worshipped. Jesus Christ is coming with a holy judgment.

There is no doubt to who he is. There is no doubt to his rightful position. There is no doubt he deserves all worthy.

All worship. You see, when I open today's sermon and I talk about unrest in the Middle East and even south of the border and what goes on in Canada and people do not understand, these are not acts of random chance.

[36 : 49] These aren't accidents. The one who sits on the throne still rules. There is still a plan and we are going to be reading what that plan is.

And that plan will include justice, righteousness, and redemption. And because there is a throne, God is sovereign and right to do as he pleases.

You see, before we can understand what is to happen, what is written on these scrolls, we need to grasp the idea that God is perfectly righteous, perfectly knowing, perfectly seeing, perfectly holy, and perfectly worthy to do as he pleases.

And he gives it to the perfect Lamb of God. And he is the one who is going to claim what is his own.

Throughout Christianity, Christians have feared the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation isn't to be feared, my friends.

[38 : 20] The future is not dark. The future is full and it's bright and it's full of God's glory. It is no accident.

God is coming to perfectly rule. rule. And he's going to do that with a perfect plan. If you are one who trusts in the Lamb who was slain, you are in the hand of one who bought you with the Lamb's blood.

He promised to never let you go. And because of that, your future is not meaningless.

You see, my contention is that our future means more today than it did yesterday. You see, if you believe what is coming, this needs to change the direction of your life.

This needs to change the attitude of your life. This needs to change the perception of your life. Allow me to quote John Piper when it comes to your life.

[39 : 53] He says, don't waste your life. life. My friends, if you think more of your retirement and plan of retirement than planning how to serve God, the living God, you may be wasting your life.

life. If you spend your time of the things that you wish to acquire in this world, you may be wasting your life.

If you spend your time trying to attain what we've heard Pastor Dave talk about, the good life, rather than think about the things of God, I don't worry about you wasting your life at this point.

I worry that you may miss out on the next life. When John took the words of Jesus Christ and wrote about the things that were to come, this is the light that we are to live in.

do you plan for these things?

[41 : 38] Do you actually plan on how to serve God in your church? Do you actually, listen, I know people who sit down once a year and they make out a master's schedule of their whole year, how they spend their money, what they want to acquire, what investments they're going to have, but what is often woefully missing is where they are going to spiritually invest their time, their money, and themselves.

you see, these times of unrest are not to be feared.

These times of unrest are to remind us that we need to start thinking rightfully about our faith and what our king who sits on the throne has called us to.

it's easy to get lost in the good times. It's easy to forget when we see our nest eggs growing and our children flourishing, but it's usually during those times of trial that we get called closer to Christ, Christ, and it's there we feel his sweet satisfaction, his sweet presence.

How do you think those first century Christians were living in light of the news of this letter that John had written them?

[43 : 28] my friends, the most sobering aspect of the next part of revelation is that people will fight to stand against God.

My question for you is as a believer in Christ, do you fight to stand with God?

Let's pray. Dear holy, heavenly, great, worthy Father, Father, these passages are a great reality check on who we are as people, individuals, as a church.

Father, I don't believe there's a person here who wants to waste their life, but it's so easy to get caught into the immediacy and value our own health, our own financial security over the things that you may be calling us to.

Father, I give you praise and I give you thanks for the people that I do know that sacrifice much for your kingdom. They fight to stand with you, oh, Father.

[45 : 17] Father, I pray that none would be here that would be lukewarm, that would make you sick. pray that each and every believer who's assembled at Squamish Baptist Church would have an understanding that they are either hot or cold and seek to be hot before you.

Father, I pray that you give them an insatiable appetite and hunger for your righteousness. Father, I pray these things in my own life just as much as I do in anybody else's life, that I would have the awe of John to declare behold when I think of my God and my Father, my Redeemer, my Savior.

Behold the Lamb who was slain, who was and is and is to come. thank you for your word. Amen.