The Throne Room of Lord God Almighty and the Slain Lamb

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Date: 10 September 2023 Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0:00] Revelation. We're going to be reading chapters 4 and 5. Paul Brennan, one of our ministers, will be preaching to us on that a little later. If you don't have a Bible, we have plenty of visitors' Bibles available. Do grab one and read along as we read in Revelation chapter 4 and 5.

So, very last book of the Bible. I'm beginning verse 1 of chapter 4. Apostle John writes, After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice, which I had 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 and 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, 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.

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 strong 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 no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. I saw a lamb standing as 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 when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 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. And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth. Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voices 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.

[5:19] And the four living creatures said, amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped. Amen. This is God's words. We will return to it shortly.

Well, good morning. Please do have those chapters from Revelation. Chapters four and five, please have them open in front of you as we consider these chapters together.

Amen. Amen.

If you are wearied, perhaps weeping in the Christian life, if you are worried because of what you see going on in the world around you, if you wonder to yourself, what on earth is going on, where is history going?

Amen. Amen. If your worship of God and every aspect of life is perhaps grudging, then these chapters are what you need to hear this morning.

[6:31] These chapters are what we all need to hear this morning because these chapters reveal to us ultimate realities. And it's really very hard to begin to do justice to the scale and the magnitude of what we read here in these verses.

The curtain which hangs across the world we see is drawn back. And that is a curtain which our enemy would have us believe is never drawn back.

It is a curtain that our enemy would have us believe is the sum total of reality, but it's not. Revelation pulls back the curtain of the scene worlds and we get a glimpse into the heavenly throne room.

And it's a sight of dazzling splendor and power and majesty. And it takes our breath away when we really consider what it says. It takes our breath away.

The apostle John, who penned these words, is shown a majestic vision as he stands on the very threshold of heaven itself.

[7:44] Verse 1 tells us he's there and a door is open into heaven. And this is what he sees. And chapter 4 is like a panoramic, big vision, big picture.

The heavenly throne room. Chapter 5 zooms in. And we get a close-up of one object in particular at first, a scroll.

And then we zoom out. And we see the one who is worthy to open the scroll. And we zoom out again and we see the worship across all of creation in response to what is seen in the throne room.

The impact of what we read here ought to be that we fall to our knees, that we worship the one who sits on the throne, that we worship the lamb who was slain.

We are to worship. And that is the response we see through the whole chapter. Song of praise after song of praise builds until the very end.

[8:51] Look at the very last couple of verses. End of chapter 5. Verse 13. Here's the climax. 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.

That is where this chapter ends. All of creation. Every living thing. Praising God the Father. Praising God the Son. Now maybe you've been to a big sporting event.

Maybe you've been down at Ibrox or Parkhead or Hamden. Maybe you've been to a big concert where the whole stadium is singing. Everyone's there praising and singing.

It's pretty astonishing, isn't it, if you've been to an event like that. Well, multiply that by infinity. And you've got all of creation. Every single living being praising God.

It's praise you can feel reverberate in your chest. The earth itself pulsates with praise. It's utterly overwhelming. That's the picture at the end of chapter 5.

[10:04] Everything. Praising God. That blows our minds. Revelation 4 and 5 will show us that over all the ebbs and flows of history, there is another power at work.

Divine, saving and sovereign. Because all of human history is not determined by us, but rather the events that are touched on in this chapter.

The people, the person, who's at the very center of this chapter determines history. Jesus Christ. The Lamb King. The Lion Lamb who was slain.

He is the epicenter of history. The Son of God crucified and risen and ascended. We read these chapters and we're almost speechless.

And we need God's help, don't we, to enable us to grasp the magnitudes and the glory of what we see. And having seen the magnitude of God's glory, we need his help to respond.

[11:11] The impact of this vision ought to reassure us and strengthen our spines because we see who really is on the throne.

Who really is in charge of history. It ought to fill our hearts with such joy and thankfulness because we see the Lamb who was slain for us. And it ought to humble us and move us to worship with all of our beings because you and I get to worship this one who's on the throne.

We get to worship the eternal creator. And we get to worship him because we've been redeemed by the conquering son. And having meditated on these words together, we will, I trust, think, who am I?

Who am I? And who is God? Who is God? I'm so small. I'm tiny. I'm much weaker than I realize.

But he is much more glorious. He is everything. He is so much more powerful and awesome than I dare to imagine. So let's step into the throne room together this morning and take in the sight.

[12:25] Let's hear the message of comfort and reassurance this vision gave to its first readers. Those Christians in Asia who were believers under pressure, struggling for their faith.

This is a vision to reassure them and reassure us. So let's look. Let's gaze into the throne room. So first, chapter 4. This is all about the eternal creator king, the one who reigns on the throne.

We see in this vision that God the Father sits on the throne, ruling the cosmos that he created, and therefore we must worship him. Look at verse 1.

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. This is a glimpse into super reality, ultimate reality.

This is the very epicenter of the universe. This is where true power and ultimate sovereignty are located. Now we can all think of places here on earth that are particular concentrations of power.

[13:36] Number 10 Downing Street. The House of Commons. Old Trafford. I've been in the Oval Office once in my life.

I've been in the Oval Office once. And it is, many say, given that it's the office of the President of the United States of America, many say it's the most powerful office in the world. Now I wasn't in the real one.

But I was in an exact replica in the Ronald Reagan Library. It was just exact dimensions, how he had it set out when he was President. But just being in that room, you felt the aura of power.

It felt a pretty impressive place to be. Well, multiply the Oval Office by a billion. And you begin to see something of the power and the eminence of what we see here in chapter 4.

This is the throne room of heaven. This is the very epicenter of the world, of the universe. This is the center of universal power. This is where the throne is. Ten times we have mention of the throne in this chapter.

And the throne and who is seated upon it is what this chapter is all about. Now we don't get the details as to what God looks like as he's seated on the throne.

But we do get the impact of his presence. We do get the impact of his presence through astonishing sights and sounds and sensations.

We see the impact of the glory of God. And the descriptions we have here in chapter 4 are vivid. And they are saturated in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Now, we don't have time to get fully into the detail. We'll go through some of it, but the general impression is what we need to get. We need to get the impression of God's glory and power and might.

But just notice some of the details here. We're told there, verse 3, that he had the appearance of jasper and carnelian.

[15:43] Now, these were precious stones which were green and red in their color. And they were found in the breastplates of the priestly robes. You read about that in the Old Testament.

The rainbow which is described surrounding the throne. There was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. End of verse 3. That reminds us, doesn't it, of the covenant with Noah.

Reminding us that for God's children, the storm is over. And this imagery of a throne with a rainbow surrounding it's picked up in Ezekiel chapter 1, which describes the throne and the glory of God.

And then verse 4. We have these 24 thrones surrounding the throne. And on these 24 thrones are 24 elders clothed in white garments.

And we've seen these white garments already in Revelation. And the white garments, they speak of standing in righteousness before God the Father.

[16:44] These garments are given to believers who overcome. And the 24 elders, that is most likely a reference to the church, past and present.

Old and New Testament. The 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles. It's an indication of the completeness of God's people. Representative believers all through the ages.

24 is also the number of priests and musicians who would be on duty in the temple day and night through the Old Testament.

Around the clock, attending to the worship of God. You can read that in 1 Chronicles 24 and 25. So the picture is of constant worship around the throne all the time from all of God's people.

Because the one who sits on the throne in the very center, he is worthy. He is God. He is worthy of worship. The lightning and the thunder, verse 5, remind us, don't they, of the events of Sinai.

[17:57] When God spoke to Moses, Exodus 19. They speak of his presence and his power. And then in front of the throne, you've got these seven torches.

Which it says are the seven spirits of God. Now in the scriptures, these seven torches or lamps are associated with God's all-powerful spirit. It's not that there are seven separate spirits within the Godhead.

But rather seven represents the fullness and completeness of God's spirit. God the Holy Spirit is present here.

Along with God the Father. And as we'll see, God the Son. And then you have the sea of glass, verse 6.

Like crystal. And again, that's another reference, probably to the Old Testament and the temple. In the temple, outside the temple, there was this huge bronze basin with water in it

[19:01] And here, it's being described like crystal. In other words, it was perfectly calm. It was so calm you could see through it, like crystal. And again, in the Old Testament, the sea was often a place of chaos and waves and storms and danger.

It was a place to be feared. But here, in the throne room of heaven, this sea is perfectly calm. It's like crystal.

And yet, you've got thunder and lightning just above it, across the throne. The sea is perfectly flat.

Chaos is banished. This is the throne room of God. This is where he reigns. There's so much more we could delve into.

But that's just briefly where some of these images are coming from. Steeped in the Old Testament scriptures. And we're left in no doubt as to the magnitude and the glory of the one who is seated on the throne.

[20:05] This is God himself. The creator and sustainer of all things. The beginning and the end. The one who reigns and lives forever and ever. And these four creatures, these living creatures, are surrounding the throne.

And again, it's imagery drawn from Ezekiel chapter 1. And the descriptions here are similar, but not identical to what you see in Ezekiel. But putting the two together, these four living creatures are angelic beings.

They communicate something of God's power, his character, his omniscience. And they're pointing to the four corners of the earth. This reign extends over all of creation.

And what is everybody doing? Well, the four living creatures, the elders, they are all praising God.

And here is what they're saying. Middle of verse 8. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come.

[21:16] Looking down to verse 11. The 24 elders join their voices to the four creatures and they say, 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. What we see here is worship.

Praising the one who is on the throne. And they give thanks to God for who he is. They praise God for being God.

Holy, holy, holy. Who was and is to come. His holiness, his eternality. They praise him for who he is.

And they praise him because he's the creator and sustainer of all things. Verse 11. He is utterly unique. There is no one like God.

[22:20] There are in the end only two categories of being in the universe. There's God and everything else. Those are the two categories.

There is the creator and there's everything that's been created. And you and I, we are just creatures. And we owe everything to the creator.

And we catch a glimpse of his glory in this chapter. And the only response, the only possible response, when his glory is seen, is that he's worshipped.

That we praise him because of who he is. He's at the very center of history. He's at the very center of the universe. And we find our purpose, our fulfillment, our meaning in worshipping and serving and praising him.

That's the only possible response. That is the only response we see here in this chapter. Praising him because of who he is.

[23 : 25] And that is what we're to be about. That is what our lives are to be about. Regardless of whatever else is going on in our lives. No matter the hardships.

No matter the persecutions that we may face. We need to direct our gaze towards the throne room of heaven. And seeing it, we worship our Lord and our God.

That is the magnitude of this chapter. The eternal creator king on his throne who reigns forever. We must worship him.

Well, that's chapter 4. The Lord who reigns. Chapter 5. We see the lamb king. The one who ransoms his people.

We see in chapter 5. God the son has conquered. Through being slain. And redeeming his people. He is therefore worthy of our worship.

[24:30] So we zoom in. Now in this chapter. And our attention. Is focused on one item. Which is held in the hand of the one who sits on the throne.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 5. Then I saw in the right hand of him who's seated on the throne. A scroll. What is this scroll all about?

Why is it so important? Seems rather odd, doesn't it? Given what we've just seen in chapter 4. The magnitude of the glory. And suddenly we're focusing on a scroll. In the hand of the one who sits on the throne.

Well, this scroll. Has unparalleled significance. In all that's about to unfold in the rest of Revelation. This scroll contains in detail.

God's plans and purposes for all of history. One commentator said. It's best understood. This scroll. Is best understood as God's plan of judgment and redemption.

[25:35] A plan that has been set in motion. By Christ's death and resurrection. But is yet to be completed. This scroll. Is the unfolding of history.

It is the book of human destiny. And it contains the very plans of God for the history of mankind and all the cosmos. Plans established in the very beginning.

Which we read about in Genesis. Plans to extend his rule over the whole earth. Plans that would be thwarted by the evil one. Sin would enter the world.

And God would have to send the son of a woman to crush the head of the serpent. One who would redeem his people and destroy his enemies.

And given that this document holds within its pages. The destiny of everything. It is therefore a book of unparalleled significance.

[26:31] This is the book of human destiny. And John sees this scroll. And the angel proclaims verse 2.

Who is worthy to open the scroll? Who can open it? Who is worthy? That question goes out to the throne room of heaven.

Who can open the scroll? And there is silence. Verse 3. No one is able to open it.

No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll. Or to look into it. So the apostle John sees this vision.

He sees this scroll. Nobody can open it. And his response. All he can do is weep. Look at verse 4.

[27:32] I began to weep loudly. Because no one was found worthy to open the scroll. Or to look into it. John weeps. It is a picture, isn't it?

Of the utter helplessness of man. Because we are utterly unable to unlock God's purposes. We are unable to bring about the promised redemption.

We are unable to bring about fulfillment of history. And John knows that if the scroll remains unopened. If nobody can open this scroll. Then there is no redemption. No salvation.

But there is hope. Verse 5. One of the elders said to me. Weep no more. Behold. The lion of the tribe of Judah.

The root of David has conquered. So that he can open the scroll. And it's seven seals. The lion of Judah. The root of David.

[28:36] The long promised Messiah. The lion king. The one the scriptures look forward to. And anticipated. Has now come and conquered. Says this elder. He's come.

That's what John hears. But look at what he sees. Verse 6. And between the throne.

And the four living creatures. And among the elders. I saw a lamb. Standing. As though it had been slain. Verse 7.

And he went. And took the scroll. He doesn't see. This great. Lion king. That he was thinking.

He's heard about. But rather he sees. A slain lamb. This is. The promised. Messiah. The root of David.

[29:31] The promised. Suffering servant. Who would die. For his people. This is the promised. Sacrificial. Passover lamb. And it's only now. That John sees the lamb.

No mention at all. Has been made of the lamb. Up to this point. In all the descriptions. Of the heavenly throne room. No mention is made. Perhaps John didn't see.

But. Maybe that's unlikely. I wonder instead. If. John is in fact. Witnessing. The arrival. In the heavenly throne room. The arrival.

Of the resurrected Jesus. This is the ascension. From a heavenly perspective. This is the risen Lord Jesus. Arriving. In heaven. Having conquered.

Through the cross. From an earthly perspective. We get the description. In Luke 24. Here's what it says. Then he. The resurrected Lord Jesus.

[30:24] Led them. As far out as Bethany. And lifting up his hands. He blessed them. And while he blessed them. He passed from them. And was carried up. Into heaven.

That's the description. From an earthly perspective. Revelation 5. Gives us the heavenly perspective. The lion of Judah. The slain lamb. Arrives.

In the heavenly throne room. He's enthroned. And takes the scroll. It's because. The Lord Jesus. Has conquered. It's because.

End of verse 5. He's able to take. And open the scroll. Because he's conquered. With his death. And resurrection. The Lord Jesus. Inaugurates. The promised kingdom.

All that was anticipated. In the Old Testament. All the promises. Through the ages. Have now. Been. Fulfilled. See. The cross of Christ.

[31:20] Is the very center. The very epicenter. Of everything. Without the cross. This scroll. Remains unopened. It is through the cross.

That Jesus. Conquers the enemy. It's through the cross. That Jesus blood. Was shed. Redeeming for himself. For people. From every tribe. And tongue. And nation. And language. It is through the cross.

That God is able to bring. Fruition. And fulfillment. To all his plans. All his purposes. All his promises. Are fulfilled. Because Jesus. Died on the cross.

And rose again. The Lord Jesus. Is the only one. Who can open the scroll. Only he. Can put. Into effect.

God's great promises. For the cosmos. Promises of a new creation. Of heavens. And a new earth. Promises of his people. Ruling over the whole earth. And that is what the rest.

[32:18] Of revelation. Sets out. It sets out. The unfolding. Of history. To that end. To the final. Consummation. Of God's kingdom. That is what we are going to see.

Unfolding. Through the rest of the book. So do we see that. Everything. Everything. Depends. On the lamb. Who was slain.

The lamb. Who died on the cross. And rose again. Everything depends on it. Not just. Your own salvation.

Not just my salvation. Of course it includes that. Christ's death. Christ's death. Was. A sacrifice for sin. He has redeemed us. But it's more than that.

Isn't it? It's everything. All of the father's plans. For the whole cosmos. Depend. On Christ. And his death on the cross. Everything in time. And eternity. Depends on it.

[33:14] So this vision. Is to be a great comfort to John. To his first readers. And to us. To know that there is one.

Who is worthy to open this scroll. If this scroll. Was to remain. Unopened. Then there is no.

Protection. For God's people. In the hour of trial. No judgments. Upon a persecuting world. No ultimate triumph.

For believers. No new heavens. No new earth. No future inheritance. If that scroll. Remains unopened. Then none of those things happen. Because the scroll.

Must be opened. Because. History. Must unfold. According to God's plans. And his promises. And Jesus. Has to open the scroll. And he can.

[34:11] Because of what he's done. He can. Because of the cross. There is. One. Worthy. The lamb. Who was slain. The apostle Paul.

Writes these words. He humbled himself. By becoming obedient. To the point of death. Even death on a cross. Therefore. God. Has highly exalted him.

And bestowed on him. The name that is above every name. So that at the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow. In heaven. And on earth. And under the earth. And that every tongue confess. That Jesus Christ.

Is Lord. To the glory of God the Father. Jesus was. Slain. He conquered. And now.

He reigns. History. Is in his hands. And because. Jesus reigns. He is worthy. Of worship. And he's worthy.

[35:10] Of worship. Not just. From us. But from the whole. Cosmos. And from verse 8. Of chapter 5. We see the response.

From the heavenly court. Indeed. All of creation. Three songs of worship. In response. To the lamb. Who is slain. In response. To the one. Who can open the scroll.

Three sets of worship. It begins. It begins. With those. Immediately around. The throne. We've just read.

With. The four living creatures. The 24 elders. And they. Begin this song. A new song. In verse 9. They say.

Worthy. Are you. To take the scroll. And to open it. Seals. For you. Were slain. And. By your blood. You ransomed. People for God. From every.

[36:07] Tribe. And language. And people. And nation. And you've made them. A kingdom. And priests. To our God. And they. Shall reign. On the earth. That is the implications.

Of Christ's. Work on the cross. He redeems. The people. From every tribe. Tongue. And nation. They are a kingdom. Of priests. And they shall reign. On the earth. And then we get.

A second song. Verse 11. Then I looked. And I heard. Around the throne. And the living creatures. And the elders. And the voices. Of many angels. Numbering the myriads.

And myriads. Of thousands. Of thousands. And they sing. Their song. So it begins. With the four. Creatures. And the elders. And now it expands. Out. To the angels.

Unnumbered angels. And they sing. Verse 12. Worthy is the lamb. Who was slain. To receive power. And wealth. And wisdom. And might.

[37:04] And honor. And glory. And blessing. And then it expands out again. Verse 13. And every creature. In heaven. And on earth. And under the earth. And in the sea.

And all that is in them. Every single living thing. That's ever been. And they say to him. Who sits on the throne.

And to the lamb. Be blessing. And honor. And glory. And might. Forever and ever. With each song.

And the camera zooms out. From those immediately. Surrounding the throne. In the first song. To the whole. Of created order. With the third song. And this is the only right response.

To what we've just witnessed. This is the only right response. To seeing the ascended Lord Jesus. Take his place in heaven. And take the scroll. The long promised Messiah.

[38:03] Has now come. And conquered. He rules. He has absolute power. And the only right way. To respond. Must be. To praise. And acknowledge him.

For who he is. Jesus alone. Is worthy. To receive worship. So we're to praise him. Now I don't presume to know.

The real state. Of everyone's heart. In this room this morning. Of course I don't. No doubt. There'll be some here. Who've never acknowledged. Jesus as Lord.

There'll be some here. Who've never sought refuge. In him. For the forgiveness of sin. Never cried out to him. For mercy. Well if that's you. Then refuse him no longer.

Call out to him. He will not refuse you. He will not turn you away. Join your voice. To the millions across the globe. Today. Who praise Jesus for his death.

[39:05] His resurrection. His ascension. His reign. His future coming in glory. Join your voice to theirs. Because Jesus. Is the lamb who was slain. He alone.

Controls the destiny of history. The only logical thing you can do. Is praise him. For many of us.

This morning. You have already repented. And believed. You. Have maybe followed Jesus. All your life. For many many years. Well if that's you. Then here again. Christ is.

On the throne. He has redeemed you. By his blood. You belong to him forever. You are now called to serve him. On earth. And you do so.

Knowing that he reigns. He reigns at this very minute. And he will do for all eternity. All things must ultimately glorify him.

[40:00] His will is carried out across the universe. The throne rules. The lamb reigns. And as a result. You need not fear.

In times of tribulation. Persecution. Anguish. You don't need to fear. Because of who sits on the throne. You may face opposition.

You may face the vain threats. Of the evil powers. Against the gospel. But we need not be fearful. Christ is sovereign. He reigns over all things.

For our goods. So let's press on. Worshipping him together. Making disciples in his name. For his glory. Jesus reigns.

God's on the throne. To him. Who sits. On the throne. And to the lamb. Be blessing. And glory. And honor. Forever. And ever.

[40:59] Amen. That is our song. Let me pray. Father God.

Father God. Please. Open the eyes. Of our hearts and minds. To see you.

In all your glory. Lord. These words. Are. Too wonderful. Almost. To comprehend. So Lord. Would you enliven.

Our dull hearts. And help us respond. In obedience. And faith. Help us respond. With praise. In our hearts. And on our lips. That we would glorify you.

All the days of our life. Lord. Please help us. Help us to respond. To these words. As we ought. For we ask. In Jesus name.

[41:57] Amen. Amen.