

Lesson 7 – 13 December 2009

The Throne in Heaven

Lesson Scope: Revelation 4 and 5

Lesson Focus

Chapter 4 begins the third division of the Book of Revelation. John now writes of "the things which shall be hereafter" (1:19). John is told to "come up hither." Consequently, the vision is heavenly and from a heavenly perspective. The heavenly visions prepared John to witness the pouring out of judgment upon the earth.

John saw clearly that God is on the throne and is in sovereign control. He is worthy of worship because He created all things (4:11). The Lamb too is worthy of worship because He redeemed mankind with His own blood (5:9).

The study of God's authority should inspire every Christian. To the sinner, the idea of God's complete sovereignty strikes terror; but to the saint, it is a blessing. He finds security in the thought that God is controlling all things. In fact, all the events of eternity will issue from God's throne. Christians anticipate being among that group of redeemed ones who will render worship to the glorious King in a better way than they can now. We also find security in the thought that this King of kings will judge righteously and that we need not respond in vengeance to the wrongs done to us.

The Almighty reigns from His eternal throne. The activities surrounding the throne focus upon the Lord God and upon the Lamb who is worthy to open the sealed book of God's judgments.

Lesson Aim: To gain a vision of the supreme authority of the heavenly throne and the worthiness of Christ to administrate that authority.

Theme Verse

[Psalm 45:6](#). Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

Lesson Text

"Behold, a Throne"

Rev. 4:1-11

After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. ²And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. ³And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. ⁴And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. ⁵And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind. ⁷And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. ⁹And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, ¹⁰The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

"Lo,... a Lamb"

Rev. 5:1-2

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

Rev. 5:5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Rev. 5:8-10

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. ⁹And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Rev. 5:13-14

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. ¹⁴And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Questions for Study

"Behold, a Throne"

1. What are the prominent features of the throne in heaven?
2. What is suggested by the rainbow around the throne?
3. Of what significance are the four beasts that surround the throne?
4. How should we approach this throne of glory?

"Lo,... a Lamb"

5. What are the significant features of the book in verse 1?
6. Why is Christ alone worthy to open the seals?
7. What can we learn about worship from this heavenly scene?

Analyzing the Passage

The first thing that John saw was an occupied throne. The scene was glorious beyond description it was the throne of God! The rainbow reminds us of God's promise to Noah. The twenty-four seats, upon which the elders sat, were really thrones. The twenty-four elders represent redeemed humanity. The seven Spirits of God suggest the completeness of the Holy Spirit. The four beasts or living ones represent agents of divine service who join the angels and elders in bringing worship and praise to God. Their resemblance and description represent the attributes of God.

The sealed book was likely a scroll. The contents filled the scroll and over-

flowed to the back as well. We are not told here what the book contained, but when the seals are broken in later chapters, the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth. Christ is worthy to take the book, open the seals, and bring the redemption of man and the earth to final completion. A glorious worship scene follows in heaven when the Lamb is found worthy to unloose the seals. The angels, the four beasts and the twenty-four elders all join together in a grand chorus, singing "Worthy is the Lamb."

Principles and Applications

"Behold, a Throne"

1. *The throne in heaven is an occupied throne (4:2-3).*

When Isaiah was given a vision of God (chapter 6), he saw the Lord on the throne when Israel's throne was empty. Uzziah had died, but God is eternal. His throne is always occupied. This truth is either comforting or disquieting. Isaiah found comfort, but the unbeliever in the face of divine judgment is greatly disquieted (Revelation 6:16). We find comfort in knowing that God is sovereignly reigning over the affairs of men.

2. *The throne is the seat of divine judgment (4:2).*

The twenty-four elders that surround the throne are members of the heavenly court. God has the sealed book in His right hand. The stage is set to make disposition of the matter at hand. The atmosphere is charged with lighting and thunder, and the Holy Spirit is present.

3. *Divine judgment is for those who spurn divine mercy (4:3).*

The rainbow signifies God's covenant of mercy with Noah. Surrounding the throne are those who have reached out for mercy and found saving grace. In the midst of judgment, God is calling men to repentance.

4. *Agents of divine service surround the throne (4:6-8).*

The special service of the Holy Spirit is there. The four living creatures are giving glory, honor, and thanksgiving to the One on the throne. The redeemed are there as participants in the judgment and in the worship.

"Lo.... a Lamb"

5. *The redemptive work of the Lamb qualifies Him to break the seals and open the book (5:5).*

This qualified Person is a man of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of King David. He lived a perfect life and was slain as an offering for sin. This Lamb is both able and willing to do the work of a kinsman redeemer. As in the experience of Ruth, we become His bride and reign with Him.

6. *The Lamb is worthy of worship because of His redemptive work (5:9-10).*

This scene of worship is marvelous to behold! The song is new and the singing is special. The words of the song magnify the work of Christ and His worthiness to administrate the content of the book. All creation joins in the worship. But specific mention is made of the elders who prostrate themselves before the Lamb and worship Him.

Important Teachings

1. The throne in heaven is an occupied throne (4:2-3).
2. The throne is the seat of divine judgment (4:2).
3. Divine judgment is for those who spurn divine mercy (4:3).
4. Agents of divine service surround the throne (4:6-8).
5. The redemptive work of the Lamb qualifies Him to break the seals and open the book (5:5).
6. The Lamb is worthy of worship because of His redemptive work (5:9-10).

Answers to Questions

1. *What are the prominent features of the throne in heaven?*

The throne is characterized by glory, grandeur and beauty! It is surrounded by a rainbow and the redeemed upon thrones. It is very awesome with lightning and thunder. The four beasts are there, and it is bright with light from the seven lamps of fire.

2. *What is suggested by the rainbow around the throne?*

The rainbow accents the glorious majesty of the King. It suggests that God will keep His promises. In judgment He will remember mercy.

3. *Of what significance are the four beasts that surround the throne?*

In Ezekiel the cherubim fit the same description as the four living creatures of Revelation. Their eyes denote omniscience and omnipresence. Their wings signify activity and service.

These four descriptions were used on the banners under which the tribes of Israel encamped. They might also be representative of the four Gospels.

4. *How should we approach this throne of glory?*

The elders fall down before the throne in all humility. Isaiah cried, "Woe is me!" The Lord's prayer begins: "Hallowed be thy name." We approach the throne in the Name of Jesus, who alone is worthy and present with the Fa-

ther for us.

5. What are the significant features of the book in verse 1?

The book was in the hand of Him that sat on the throne; its words carried divine authority. It was written on both sides. The fact that it was sealed with multiple seals suggests the importance of the contents. Only a qualified person could open the seals.

6. Why is Christ alone worthy to open the seals?

The search was for a man (5:3) worthy to open the book. Therefore, no other heavenly being or person of the Trinity was qualified. It is also necessary that the man is able. Christ is the only Man who lived a perfect life. He alone could offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin and pay the price of redemption. He alone is worthy to take the book and open the seals.

7. What can we learn about worship from this heavenly scene?

The great theme of worship is redemption. Worship is given in humility; they fell down before the Lamb. Worship involves singing and praying; they have harps and vials filled with incense. Worship is to be whole-hearted; they spake loudly. Worship is to be collective; every creature helped.

Summarizing the Lesson

God is still on the throne. He was on the throne at Creation, He was on the throne when Jesus was crucified, and He will be on the throne in the Day of the Lord. At times it may seem otherwise, but some day God will vindicate Himself and His people. As we view the Lord high and lifted up, let us bow before Him in reverence and worship.

Research Guide

1. Read of Isaiah's vision of the throne in Isaiah 6:1-4.
2. Read Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 10.
3. Review the account of Ruth and Boaz in Ruth 3 and 4.