

WORSHIP SERVICE - 8.29.2021

THE PATTERN OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: Heaven's central focus is the worship of the Sovereign God and it must be our central focus also.

Revelation 4:1-11

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." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. 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. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. 5 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, 6 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: 7 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. 8 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, is the Lord God Almighty,

who was and is and is to come!"

9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four 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,

11 "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.”

II. HEAVENLY CREATURES AROUND THE THRONE

1. THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

- **Who are these twenty-four elders?**
- 12 and 24 are significant numbers in Scripture.
- 12 is a number of fullness / completeness.
- 12 tribes of Israel, The High Priest's breastplate had 12 stones embedded in it, 12 apostles.
- Rev. 21 The New Jerusalem has 12 gates, guarded by 12 angels, the wall had 12 foundations inscribed with the names of the 12 apostles.
- 24 has many references in the O.T. The number was connected to the worship of God in the temple.
- David divided the responsibilities for temple service into companies of 24.
- 1 Chron. 24 - Priests organized into 24 divisions
- 1 Chron. 25- Musicians and singers were organized under 24 worship leaders.
- 1 Chron. 26 - there were 24 gatekeepers assigned each day at the temple
- Numbers divisible by twelve in Revelation have to do with the people of God.
- Rev. 7 - the number of the sealed - 144,000 (12x12x1000)
- Many scholars believe that these 24 elders represent the 12 patriarchs of the OT and the 12 apostles of the NT, or the entirety of the people of God, the church of God under both the Old and New Testaments.
- **Rev. 21:10-14** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- These 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles together represent the sum of the elect and redeemed saints of God.
- The 24 elders themselves though are NOT redeemed saints because they are distinguished in other passages in Revelation from the multitude of saints, like in Rev. 7
- These 24 elders are some high rank of angelic beings that represent the church as a whole.
- This scene reminds us that there is a parallel in heaven to what we do here in the earth.
- Our weekly gathering, like that of the seven churches, is a reflection of the heavenly existence and identity.
- As we worship this morning, we do so in connection to the heavenly reality of worship that is right now taking place.

2. THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

6b And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 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.

- **Who and what are these living creatures?**
- Four is an earthly number, it is symbolic of creation in all its fullness.
- Four is found repeatedly in Revelation, Four horsemen released to bring judgment on the earth. Rev 6, Four angels at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds Rev. 7, The New Jerusalem is a city with four sides Rev. 21

- The depiction of these living creatures are similar in many ways to the vision seen by Ezekiel (Ez.1) but there are differences.
- Whatever these living creatures are they are definitely a high rank and order of supernatural beings that are in the throne room of God and are close to God.
- Because there are four and they bear a likeness to the created order, it seems likely then that they are representative of the whole created order of animate life.
- They represent the entire creation.
- These are servants of the Sovereign God who inaugurate and mediate the judgments upon mankind.
- The eyes symbolize omniscience, they are divine agents, searching the earth and executing punishment on behalf of the Lamb to those who deserve it.

- **Joel Beeke**, Revelation Commentary, sums it up this way, *“John’s vision indicates that God is sovereign in all created realms. He is always on his throne. He is the focal point of worship for all the assembled powers of the universe. He is sovereign over all.”*

- Angelic beings of terrifying brilliance, magnificence, power and glory are part of God’s created order in the heavenly realm.
- They exist to worship him and serve him, and carry out his divine will in all of Creation.
- But worship—that seems to be the central focus of these beings and all of heaven.
- What are these elders and living creatures engaged in?
- Continual, unceasing worship of the Sovereign God seated on the throne.

III. THE PATTERN OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP

8 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, is the Lord God Almighty,

who was and is and is to come!”

- The main point of the vision of the throne is—God is to be glorified by all of his creation because of his holiness, power, sovereignty, and glory.
 - What the four living creatures are doing is what all of creation is meant to fulfill.
 - **Psalm 148** - everything in God’s creation is to praise him.
 - **Psalm 148:13** Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.
 - Everything that was made was created to bring glory to God and to praise him.
-
- The four living creatures are unceasing worshipers!
 - They never cease to worship day and night. That is to say, it is never ending worship.
 - And as the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever...The twenty-four elders respond with a song of worship of their own....
 - 10 the twenty-four 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, 11 “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.”
-
- Six times in Revelation it is mentioned that the living creatures and the 24 elders fall down on their faces to worship God.
 - Revelation is filled with worship! You can’t miss it! It is the central focus of heaven and main activity of heaven.

UNCEASING WORSHIPERS

- If there are magnificent beings of unceasing worship in heaven, created by God for his own glory, what does that make us who have been created by God also for his own glory?
- It makes us unceasing worshipers also!
- It’s not a matter of IF we will worship but rather WHO or WHAT we will worship!
- We were made beings of unceasing worship.
- What will our worship be directed toward?
- **Harold Best, Unceasing Worship**, starts the book writing, “*We begin with one fundamental fact about worship: at this very moment, and for as long as this world endures, everybody inhabiting it is bowing down and serving something or someone—an artifact, a person, an institution, an idea, a spirit, or God through Christ.*”
- He defines worship this way, “Worship is the continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do, and all that I can ever become in light of a chosen or choosing God.”
- Think of yourself as a being who is continually pouring out praise and worship, where is that fountain of worship directed?
- When it is not directed at God it is a corrupted worship..
- **Romans 1:21-23** speaks of man’s corrupted worship.
- For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish

hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

- A failure to honor God, give thanks to God, to glorify God, doesn't make you a non-worshiper. It means you are an idolater.
- So if Heaven is continually pouring out never-ending worship directed at the Sovereign Creator who sits on the throne, how can I direct my life to be one of unceasing worship of God?
- This chapter teaches us something about that.
- First, if we look at the central focus of heaven as the worship of God, then we see that he is the proper object of worship.
- He is the WHO of heavenly worship. That orients our worship in the right direction.
- Second, once we understand the WHO we can focus on the HOW. How are we to worship God. If worship is FOR him and directed TO him then only God can rightly define HOW he is to be worshipped. The heavenly creatures get this and so must we.

1. THE WHO OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP

- **When we SEE God rightly, we will worship God rightly.**

a. First, Worship is directed to and praises the Thrice-Holy God.

- They praise the perfection of God's Holiness; His otherness.
- He is not just once holy, or twice holy, he is three times Holy.
- This refers to his Triune nature—God is a trinity—one being, three persons, Father, Son and Spirit.
- Three signifies divine completeness and perfection.
- This song parallels Isaiah's vision of the Seraphim in Is. 6.
- We have a cautionary tale about treating God's holiness and presence in a careless manner in the story of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu. Lev. 10

b. Second, Worship is directed to the God with three titles—Lord, God, Almighty.

- They praise the perfection of God's omnipotence.
- Lord—total authority.
- God—total supremacy.
- Almighty—total power.
- The heavenly creatures have immense power themselves. They are terrifying creatures who execute the divine will of God and his judgments, they are powerful, but they recognize God is the one who has ALL power, not them.

c. Third, Worship is directed to the Eternal God.

- *"Who was and is and is to come!"*
- They praise the perfection of God's eternity, timeless existence.
- There is no time that God was not.
- Who was - God existed in the past—how far back in the past? —all of it!
- Who is - God is in the present.

- Who is to come - God is in the future.
 - But not only existing in the future, it is also the reality that he is coming again.
 - Christ is coming again - what an encouragement to suffering Christians!
 - What a motivation to faithful perseverance.
-
- When we SEE God rightly, WHO he is, WHAT he is like, when we understand what heaven itself understands, then we can begin to WORSHIP God rightly.
 - Revelation gives us a grander and more robust picture of the Holy God that demands our unceasing worship!

2. THE HOW OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP

- Because of WHO God is, HOW we worship him matters greatly.
- We don't get to define what that looks like, He does.
- Earthly worship is patterned after heavenly worship.
- Scripture tells us that the Tabernacle was a copy of the heavenly.
- **Hebrews 8:5** Speaking of the priests, Scriptures says, "They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."
- Under the old covenant, the worship of God was mediated through this copy of the heavenly temple. That is HOW the worship of God was to take place.
- Worship was the central focus of God's people as it is in heaven.
- In Christ, the old covenant way of worship God through the system of sacrifices, the sprinkling of blood, the need for priests, all of the ceremonial rites, has been rendered obsolete.
- Christ is the mediator of a new covenant because he offered a better sacrifice.
- **Hebrews 9:24-26** For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
- But the elements that were part of how God's people worshiped through the ages still remains. Singing, thanksgiving, praising, gratitude, proclamation, confession, obedience, teaching, baptizing believers, fellowshiping around WHO God is. All of these are worship.
- It is all of the those simple elements that God has prescribed, done with a view to the centrality, supremacy, holiness, and glory of God, in faith, through Jesus Christ our Mediator.
- That is worship that is acceptable to God.

WORSHIP THROUGH SINGING

- One component of HOW we are commanded to worship is through song.
- That is what we find the heavenly host doing—worshipping the LORD through song.
- All of the songs have as their object the works and attributes of God.

- They are not subjective feelings about God, but declare WHO God actually is.
 - We sing because this is what is patterned for us in heavenly worship...
 - And we sing because God has commanded us to.
 - **Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
 - We sing corporately because God has instituted singing as an acceptable way to worship him.
 - We sing songs that please God and proclaims truths about God.
 - **Bob Kauflin**, *Worship Matters*, "Every time we lead the church in worship we're doing more than singing songs. We're leading believers in a battle for the truth."
 - The heavenly creatures sing the truth about God—we must as well!
 - Singing together as God's people, is engaging in spiritual warfare, as we sing the truths about God we decry the lies of our culture and the falsehood in our world.
- **Get a true vision of WHO God is and make worshiping him the central focus of your life!**
 - **He is Holy — He alone is Worthy!**

Chapter 22 - Religious Worship And The Sabbath Day

1. The light of nature demonstrates that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all. He is just and good and does good to everyone. Therefore, he should be feared, loved, praised, called on, trusted in, and served—with all the heart and all the soul and all the strength.¹ But the acceptable way to worship the true God is instituted by him,² and it is delimited by his own revealed will. Thus, he may not be worshipped according to human imagination or inventions or the suggestions of Satan, nor through any visible representations, nor in any other way that is not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.³

¹Jeremiah 10:7; Mark 12:33. ²Deuteronomy 12:32. ³Exodus 20:4–6.

2. Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to him alone⁴—not to angels, saints, or any other creatures.⁵ Since the fall, worship is not to be given without a mediator⁶ nor through any mediation other than of Christ alone.⁷

⁴Matthew 4:9, 10; John 5:23; Matthew 28:19. ⁵Romans 1:25; Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10. ⁶John 14:6. ⁷1 Timothy 2:5.

3. Prayer with thanksgiving is an element of natural worship and so is required by God of everyone.⁸ But to be acceptable, it must be made in the name of the Son,⁹ by the help of the Spirit,¹⁰ according to his will.¹¹ It must be accompanied

by understanding, reverence, humility, fervor, faith, love, and perseverance. Prayer with others must be in a language that is understood.¹²

⁸Psalms 95:1–7; 65:2. ⁹John 14:13, 14. ¹⁰Romans 8:26. ¹¹1 John 5:14. ¹²1 Corinthians 14:16, 17.

4. Prayer is to be made for lawful things and for all kinds of people who are alive now or will live later.¹³ But prayer should not be made for the dead¹⁴ nor for those known to have sinned the sin that leads to death.¹⁵

¹³1 Timothy 2:1, 2; 2 Samuel 7:29. ¹⁴2 Samuel 12:21–23. ¹⁵1 John 5:16.

5. The elements of religious worship of God include reading the Scriptures,¹⁶ preaching and hearing the Word of God,¹⁷ teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord,¹⁸ as well as the administration of baptism¹⁹ and the Lord's supper.²⁰ They must be performed out of obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear. Also, purposeful acts of humbling^a with fasting²¹ and times of thanksgiving should be observed on special occasions in a holy and religious manner.²²

^a*solemn humiliation*

¹⁶1 Timothy 4:13. ¹⁷2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 8:18. ¹⁸Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19. ¹⁹Matthew 28:19, 20. ²⁰1 Corinthians 11:26. ²¹Esther 4:16; Joel 2:12. ²²Exodus 15:1–19, Psalms 107.

6. Under the gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is now restricted to or made more acceptable by the place where it is done or toward which it is directed. Instead, God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth²³—daily²⁴ in each family²⁵ and privately by each individual.²⁶ Also, more formal^b worship is to be performed in public assemblies, and these must not be carelessly or deliberately neglected or forsaken, when God by his word or providence calls us to them.²⁷

^b*solemn*

²³John 4:21; Malachi 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:8. ²⁴Matthew 6:11; Psalms 55:17. ²⁵Acts 10:2. ²⁶Matthew 6:6. ²⁷Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42.

7. It is the law of nature that in general a portion of time specified by God should be set apart for the worship of God. So by his Word, in a positive-moral and perpetual commandment that obligates everyone in every age, he has specifically appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy to him.²⁸ From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ the appointed day was the last day of the week. After the resurrection of Christ it was changed to the first day of the week, which is called the Lord's Day.²⁹ This day is to be kept to the end of the age as the Christian Sabbath, since the observance of the last day of the week has been abolished.

²⁸Exodus 20:8. ²⁹1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10.

8. The Sabbath is kept holy to the Lord when people have first prepared their hearts appropriately and arranged their everyday affairs in advance. Then they observe a holy rest all day from their own works, words and thoughts about their secular employment and recreation.³⁰ Not only that, but they also fill the whole time with public and private acts of worship and the duties of necessity and mercy.³¹

³⁰Isaiah 58:13; Nehemiah 13:15–22. ³¹Matthew 12:1–13.

NEED PRAYER?

Any prayer request you share with Sent Church will remain confidential and will only be shared with our lead team for the purposes of prayer. If you would like to be contacted by a pastor, please include your name and email address.

GIVING

As you are able, consider giving to support ministry at Sent Church.

You can click the Give Online button below or **Text** any amount to **84321**