

# The Lord God Almighty

Revelation 4:1-6, 8-11  
SS Lesson for 04/22/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** Ps 145:1-21

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# Introduction

## Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the truths about God and our eternal home and occupation as it is revealed by **The Lord God Almighty**. The **study's aim** is to understand that we can always learn much, even from prophecies and visions record in Scripture. The **study's application** is to live as the Lord God's people, praising Him daily.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Rev 4:11

*You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

While many interpretations of the Book of Revelation have been suggested, the only views which provide a cogent understanding are those which consider the book, beginning with chapter 4, as referring to future events. Any other system of interpretation gets lost in a maze of conflicting opinions. While the events portrayed in this futuristic section are not necessarily all in strict chronological order, they are all yet future. As such, they present a more graphic picture of the future, given in more detail, than is found in any other part of the Bible. Such a revelation is a fitting climax to all the biblical prophecies relating to human history, which are properly centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The revelation of the future opens with a vision of heaven (chaps. 4-5). Beginning in chapter 6 the seven seals, as they are broken, constitute the main chronological movement of the Great Tribulation, leading up to the second coming of Christ. The seven trumpets give the details of events which will follow the breaking of the seventh seal. Likewise in chapter 16 the seven bowls of the wrath of God unfold the content of the seventh trumpet. The order is climactic, and as the period approaches the second coming of Christ, events occur with increasing rapidity and greater devastation. Once Christ's second coming is revealed, the concluding chapters briefly summarize the wide expanse of future events—chapter 20 relating to the millennial kingdom, and chapters 21-22 describing the new heaven and the new earth. It is obvious that the main purpose of the Book of Revelation is to present the second coming of Christ and accompanying events and to alert the people of God as well as the world as a whole to the importance of being prepared for God's coming judgment.

**4:1.** John saw the vision of the heavenly throne after he heard the revelation of the messages to the churches. The time sequence is indicated by the expression **after this** (*meta tauta*, in the NASB, "after these things"). John saw **a door... open in heaven** and heard a **voice** inviting him, **Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this**. The words "what must take place after this" are similar to those in 1:19, "what will take place later." Whereas 1:19 indicates that the events *will* take place later, in 4:1b the Greek word *dei* is used, which means that the events *must* occur. This points not only to the future but also to the sovereign purpose of God. The similarity of the two expressions confirms the threefold chronological outline given in 1:19. Both the revelation and its fulfillment are chronologically subsequent to chapters 1-3.

**4:2-3.** John stated that immediately he **was in the Spirit** (or "in [my] spirit"; cf. 1:10; 17:3) meaning that experientially he was taken up to heaven though his body was actually still on the island of Patmos. **In heaven** he saw a great **throne** with One **sitting on it** who **had the appearance of jasper and carnelian**. This jasper (cf. 21:18) is a clear stone in contrast to the opaque jasper stones known today; it may have resembled a diamond. The carnelian, also known as ruby (the NIV trans. it "ruby" in the OT), and sardius, were a ruby-red color. The jasper and the carnelian were the first and last of the 12 gemstones worn on the high priest's breast (cf. Ex. 28:17-21). Jasper and sardius were used in relation to the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:13) and will be in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19-20). The throne's overall appearance was one of great beauty and color, enhanced by **a rainbow, resembling an emerald**, which **encircled the throne**. The green color of the emerald added further beauty to the scene.

**4:4.** Around the principal **throne** were **24 lesser thrones** on which were **seated... 24 elders**. **They were dressed in white** and were wearing **crowns of gold on their heads**. The crowns were similar to those given victors in Greek games (*stephanos*), in contrast with the crown of a sovereign ruler (*diadēma*, "diadem"). The crowns seem to indicate that the elders had been judged and rewarded. There has been much speculation on the identity of the elders. The two major views are (1) that they represent the church

raptured prior to this time and rewarded in heaven, or (2) that they are angels who have been given large responsibilities. The number 24 is the number of representation, illustrated in the fact that in the Law of Moses there were 24 orders of the priesthood.

**4:5.** The impressive scene of heaven was enhanced by **flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder.** Thunder is mentioned eight times in Revelation (4:5; 6:1; 8:5; 11:19; 14:2; 16:18; 19:6). John also saw **seven lamps** which **were blazing.** These seven lamps were said to be **the seven spirits of God.** These should be understood to represent the Holy Spirit rather than seven individual spirits or angels, with the concept of the sevenfold character of the Spirit (Isa. 11:2-3; cf. Rev. 1:4; 5:6). With God the Father seated on the throne and the Holy Spirit represented by the seven lamps, the stage was then set for the revelation (chap. 5) of Christ Himself as the slain Lamb.

**4:6-8. A sea of glass, clear as crystal,** was **before the throne** and reflected all the brilliant colors of the entire heavenly scene (cf. 15:2). **In the center** of the picture **four living creatures** were compared to a **lion... an ox... a man and a flying eagle. Each of the... creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around.** They were said to be continually praising God as the **holy... Almighty** (*pantokratōr*; cf. 1:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22), and eternal One (**who was, and is, and is to come**; cf. 1:8; 11:17). This is the first of 14 doxologies in the Book of Revelation. Many interpretations have been given of the four living creatures. As the Holy Spirit was seen symbolically in the seven lamps, probably the four living creatures symbolically represent the attributes of God including His omniscience and omnipresence (indicated by the creatures being full of eyes)—with the four animals bringing out other attributes of God: the lion indicating majesty and omnipotence; the ox, typical of faithful labor and patience; man, indicating intelligence; and the eagle, the greatest bird, representing supreme sovereignty. Another possible view is that they represent Christ as revealed in the four Gospels: in Matthew, the lion of the tribe of Judah; in Mark, the ox as the servant of Yahweh; in Luke, the incarnate human Jesus; and in John, the eagle as the divine Son of God. Another alternative is that the four living creatures are angels (cf. Isa. 6:2-3), who extol the attributes of God.

**4:9-11.** The worship by the four **living creatures** is attended by **the 24 elders** also worshipping the One **on the throne** and attributing to God **glory and honor and power** (cf. 5:12-13) and acknowledging that He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (cf. John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7). **They lay their crowns before the throne** in ascribing all glory to Him as the Sovereign.

### **Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

When we stand before God, what will we say to Him? Many people contemplate this moment; some have drawn up mental lists of questions they plan to put to the Lord, as if they will be the ones interrogating the Creator for His missteps and shortcomings! Some even seem to imagine they will ask the one question that will stump God (and that they will be the first to ask it)! When John was given a vision of a great assembly before the throne of God in heaven (Rev. 4:1-11), things were quite different. Nobody called attention to himself or presumed to bring questions that God had to answer. The elders and living creatures cast all their attention to the One who sat on the throne. Although they were impressive beings themselves in John's eyes, they counted themselves as nothing in the presence of the Almighty Majesty. Casting their crowns before the throne, they put everything into proclaiming His glory. What the twenty-four elders and four living creatures said (or sang—the Greek for "saying" in Revelation 4:10 was frequently used in musical contexts) can provide a condensed version of what we will likely be giving voice to throughout eternity. Let us look closely at their words. "Thou art worthy, O Lord." If we looked at ourselves, we would be compelled to declare that we are not worthy. We are certainly not worthy of any divine blessing or favor. But those before the throne were not looking at themselves; they were looking at God. And what they saw more than anything was His worth, His absolute preeminence and importance above all things. Parents sometimes tell a demanding child who expects them to cater to his whims, "It's not all about you." The world does not revolve around us, and the sooner we learn that, the better off we will be. But the converse is completely true: It is all about God. Everything revolves around Him, and the sooner we learn that, the better off we will be in every possible way. "To receive glory and honor and power." We might wonder, How can God receive glory, honor, and power when He already possesses these in infinite measure? This is entirely true, but the point here is the recognition of this reality by His subjects. People are constantly giving, or ascribing, honor and importance to any number of things in life. The only one who is worthy of our doing this, however, is God Himself. "For thou hast created all things." Here the heavenly assembly supplied one of the most important reasons for God's unmatched worthiness—without Him, nothing else would exist. He is our Creator; we are the works of His hands. We have the privilege of joining with all the

rest of creation to acknowledge our joyful dependence on our Maker. "For thy pleasure they were and are created." This is a most important truth to grasp and remember. God did not create us because He needed us but because it pleased Him to do so. We exist to bring Him joy, and that truth gives us more significance than all the accolades or praise the world can muster.

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Today's lesson pictures Heaven in terms of a royal throne room. The one seated on the throne is the king of Heaven and earth. The ones allowed access into the throne room have a certain derivative honor based on their proximity. John's vision of this scene is overwhelming for him—almost indescribable. Yet he does his best to explain what he sees, and we are thereby rewarded when we consider his words.

Many theories exist as to how Revelation should be interpreted. Some believe it is prophetic of future events, primarily those of the end times. Others think it presents a panorama of church history. Some believe Revelation is symbolically speaking of people and events from the first century, mainly those linked with the Roman Empire. Still others think that Revelation is entirely symbolic, a story that portrays the timeless struggle of good versus evil. Whatever one's view, there are some important details about Revelation that should be kept in mind while studying the book. One concerns the historical setting of the book. The apostle John was exiled on the barren island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea because of his unwavering loyalty to Jesus (Revelation 1:9). Patmos was situated about 50 miles southwest of Ephesus, off the coast of modern Turkey. Ephesus was likely the city from which John was exiled. The church at Ephesus is the first of the seven churches addressed by Jesus in Revelation 1:11; 2:1-3:22. The most probable time of writing is AD 90-96. It is remarkable that this elderly man was seen as such a threat to the Roman Empire that he would be banished in his 80s or 90s! He must have been a tireless and effective preacher. In addition, we should remember that the book of Revelation is narrative, a story told by a narrator. This does not mean it is a fictional story. Much factual history is written in narrative style. John tells what he experiences: marvelous divine visions given to him in exile by Christ. The best way to read Revelation, then, is as a story with various scenes in which the content is connected. The primary overall message of the book is that despite how intense the opposition to God's people may be, in the end they triumph and evil is vanquished for eternity. As today's lesson begins, John has already stated that "on the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10). He then experienced a marvelous vision of "someone like a son of man" (1:12-16) just before receiving Jesus' messages to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 opens up a new dimension of John's experiences.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

*(The Scriptural references and commentary was copied from a previous SS Lesson dated 05/08/11)*

### **Almighty God's Vision of Heavenly Worship (Rev 4:1-5)**

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

### **Invitation to worship (1)**

*Worship with thanksgiving and music (Ps 95:2)*

2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

*Worship with singing (1 Chron 16:9-10)*

9 Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. 10 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

*Worship with instruments (2 Chron 5:13)*

13 The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud,

*Worship by the righteous (Ps 118:19-20)*

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. 20 This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.

*Worship through praise (Rev 7:12)*

Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever.

### **Worshipping in the Spirit (2-3)**

*Worshipping in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)*

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

*Worshipping by the Spirit of God (Phil 3:3)*

3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

*Worshipping in the Spirit by offering our body as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)*

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

*Worshipping in the Spirit by praying through the Spirit (Rom 8:26-27)*

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

*Worshipping in the Spirit by building up our holy faith (Jude 1:20)*

20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

### **Worship by the participants in Heaven (4-5)**

*Worship by the heavens and skies (Ps 19:1)*

19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

*Worship by the assembly of the holy ones (Ps 89:5)*

5 The heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.

*Worship by the angels (Ps 103:20-21)*

20 Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. 21 Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

*Worship by the heavenly hosts (Luke 2:13-14)*

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

## ***Almighty God's Worthiness to Be Worshiped (Rev 4:6-11)***

6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

### **Worship by the four beast (6-9)**

#### *The Four Beast (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

The number *four* in Revelation is symbolic of the entire created world. These *living creatures* have *eyes* that observe everything. They are symbols of God's omnipresence (his presence everywhere) and omniscience (his knowledge of all things). They are able to give coverage to the four corners of the earth, to all of the created world (compare Revelation 7:1). John notices individual differences in *the four living creatures*. As with many of the things seen by John, the beasts are reminiscent of images from the Old Testament. In this case we are reminded of the four "living creatures" seen by the prophet in Ezekiel 1:5–15. The creatures in that vision each had four faces. The list of faces there is quite similar to the list here. What do these beasts symbolize? A very old explanation ties them to the four Gospels. In this interpretation Matthew is the *lion*, the king of the beasts, because he presents Jesus as the king of the Jews. Mark is the *ox*, the dependable servant animal, because he presents Jesus as the servant of all humanity. Luke is the *man*, because he presents Jesus as the Son of Man. John is the *eagle*, the imperial symbol of the Romans, because he presents Jesus as the exalted Son of God. This explanation has been used to give a picture symbol for each of the Gospels. A less complicated explanation is that the faces represent various qualities of God. Under this theory, the lion symbolizes God's power; the ox symbolizes God's faithfulness; the man symbolizes God's intelligence; and the eagle symbolizes God's sovereignty. A more likely explanation is that these four creatures represent the general categories of creatures on the earth: wild animals (lion), domesticated animals (ox), human beings (man), and creatures of the sky (eagle). Thus, the picture is related to the number four, the symbol for the created world. The detail of the *six wings* ties this vision to Isaiah's vision of Heaven (Isaiah 6). There the creatures above the throne are described as six-winged seraphim. A seraph is a heavenly creature.

#### *Commentary on Rev 4:6 from Precept Austin Web Site*

##### ***sea of glass, like crystal***

Those who achieve victory over the beast (by not loving their lives to the death, Rev. 12:11) are seen standing on this sea of glass before the throne. There, it is said to be "mingled with fire" possibly indicating the brilliance of light radiating from the crystal-like structure (Rev. 15:2).

Moses, the sons of Aaron, and the elders of Israel saw something similar when they met with God on Mount Sinai:

*Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. (Ex. 24:9-10)*

This sea may also symbolize the "river of life" which flows from the temple during the Millennium (Eze. 47:1-9) and proceeds from the throne in the eternal state (Rev. 22:1), where there is no more sea (Rev. 21:1). Both are said to be like crystal.<sup>1</sup> Corresponding to the bronze laver in the tabernacle and Solomon's Temple (Ex. 38:8; 1K. 7:23), the sea pictures the washing away of uncleanness by Christ's atonement. This sea of glass is under the throne, but was seen above from Ezekiel's perspective below the chariot throne (Eze. 1:22-26).

*Thank God the laver [in heaven] will be turned to crystal. The day will come when one of the saints will ever need confession. . . . I shall never have to go to the Heavenly Father again to tell Him I have sinned. . . . The laver is of crystal only because I and all the saints of all the ages will have been made like into the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be no more sin. This is one of the reasons why it will be Heaven.*

#### ***around the throne***

These creatures are around the throne, whereas in Ezekiel's vision the similar creatures are in the midst of the cloud of fire (Eze. 1:5).

#### ***four living creatures***

There are four creatures indicating the universal character of their representation (see the symbolic meaning of four). They are Living creatures, "to denote beings that are not human and yet not really animals of the usual kind . . . Of the four peculiar beings at God's throne, whose description Rev. 4:6-9 reminds us of the creatures in Eze. 1:5, the cherubim. See also Rev. 5:6, 8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4."4 Ezekiel also sees four living creatures (Eze. 1:5-22; 3:13; 10:1-20). Ezekiel's creatures have close similarity to these:

1. They attend the throne.
2. They are winged.
3. Aspects of their character represent a lion, an ox (or calf), a man, and an eagle.

But there are also significant differences:

1. Ezekiel's creatures had four wings whereas these have six.
2. Ezekiel's creatures each had all four faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle whereas these each have one of the characteristics.
3. No mention is made of Ezekiel's creatures themselves having eyes—although the wheels they attend are full of eyes. These creatures themselves are full of eyes.

Similarity does not make identity and we must conclude that these living creatures, while probably cherubim, are different in identity to Ezekiel's cherubim (Eze. 10:20). Since Isaiah's seraphs had six wings, perhaps these creatures are of that order (Isa. 6:2, 6).

It appears that these creatures attend God's stationary throne whereas Ezekiel's cherubim attend God's chariot throne which transports the manifestation of His glory (Ps. 18:10; Eze. 10:19-20; 11:22). We first meet with cherubim in their service of God guarding the way to the tree of life after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden (Gen. 3:24).

Satan was created as one of these cherubim serving at God's throne until he fell (Eze. 28:14). "Here are the living ones, in every way his equals, yes, infinitely his superiors, since they have access to all of the power of God. These are not with him in his rebellion. They are ready to carry into effect the orders of divine judgment."

These living creatures call John's attention to the effects of the Lamb's loosening of the first four seals whereupon the four horsemen of the Apocalypse ride forth (Rev. 6:1-7). One of the four living creatures gives the final seven bowls of God's wrath to the seven angels who will pour forth the seven plagues.

*After the Flood, the Teraphim (probably a corruption of the Cherubim) were made in imitation of them and became objects of worship [Gen. 31:19, 34-35; Jdg. 17:5; 18:14, 17-18, 20; 1 Sam. 15:23; 19:13, 16; 2 Kings 23:24; Eze. 21:21; Hos. 3:4; Zec. 10:2]. The remembrance of them was carried away by the scattered nations (Gen. 10), and probably the Assyrian sculptures are traditional corruptions of the Cherubim, for they consisted of a man with an eagle's head; a lion or a winged bull with a human head.*

The cherubim attend God's throne. The writer of Hebrews informs us that the things in the earthly sanctuary were a model of the ultimate reality in heaven above (Heb. 9:24). In the earthly Tabernacle and Temple, we find these living creatures portrayed at each end of the Ark of the Covenant and on the veil separating the holy place (Ex. 26:31; 36:35). Their images attended God's glory which was said to "dwell

between the cherubim” above the mercy seat (Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89; 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 1 Kings 7:29; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; 2 Chr. 5:7; 6:41; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16; Eze. 41:18). See *The Abiding Presence of God, A Heavenly Pattern*.

### ***lion . . . calf . . . man . . . eagle***

The symbolism conveyed by these faces is the subject of much discussion.

*The interpretations of the symbols of the four living creatures are, of course, numerous and varied. Some of them are: the four Evangelists or Gospels; the four elements; the four cardinal virtues; the four faculties or powers of the human soul; the Lord in the fourfold great events of redemption; the four patriarchal churches; the four great apostles, the doctors of the Church; the four principal angels, etc.*

As we discuss elsewhere, the interpretation of symbols can often lead in unbiblical directions, especially to the degree that non-biblical sources provide the source for their interpretation. When other passages within Scripture are taken into consideration, it seems the likeness of these four creatures reflect the four primary roles of Messiah Jesus revealed in the four gospels:

1. King (Matthew)
2. Servant (Mark)
3. Man (Luke)
4. God (John)

*Commentary on Rev 4:7 from Precept Austin Web Site*

### ***having six wings***

The cherubim Ezekiel saw had four wings (Eze. 1:11-12) whereas these creatures have six wings like the seraphim which Isaiah saw attending the throne (Isa. 6:2, 6). “In Isa. 6:2 we read, ‘Each had six wings: with twain he covered his face (in reverence, as not presuming to lift up his face to God), with twain he covered his feet (in humility, as not worthy to stand in God’s holy presence), and with twain he did fly [in obedient readiness to do instantly God’s command].’ ”

### ***full of eyes***

Eyes indicate great intelligence (Eze. 1:18; 10:12; Dan. 7:8, 20; Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 5:6; 19:12). These creatures are near the apex of God’s created order (Eze. 28:12-15).

### ***around and within***

“John’s object is to show that the six wings in each did not interfere with that which he had before declared, namely, that they were ‘full of eyes before and behind.’ The eyes were round the outside of each wing, and up the inside of each when half expanded, and of the part of body in that inward recess.” “Being so full of eyes positioned in this manner, they are able to move their wings without ever disrupting their vision.”

### ***Holy, holy, holy***

Isaiah’s seraphim made a similar pronouncement concerning God’s uniqueness (Isa. 6:3). Praises of God’s holiness are said to “enthroned” Him (Ps. 22:3). “Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Ex. 15:11). Worship of God is a major theme of this book as He brings about the redemption of creation in the culmination of history. See *Worship of God*. Three denotes completeness or may reflect the Trinity.

## **Worship by the Elders (10-11)**

*Commentary on Rev 4:10 from Barnes Notes*

The 24 elders symbolize representatives of the redeemed church in heaven (see the notes on Rev 4:4 below) also unite in the praise. The meaning, if the explanation of the symbol be correct is that the church universal unites in praise to God for all that characterizes his administration. In the connection in which this stands here, the sense would be, that as often as there is any new manifestation of the principles of the divine government, the church ascribes new praise to God. Whatever may be thought of this explanation of the meaning of the symbols, of the fact here stated there can be no doubt. The church of God always rejoices when there is any new manifestation of the principles of the divine administration. As all these

acts, in reality, bring glory and honor to God, the church, as often as there is any new manifestation of the divine character and purposes, renders praise anew. The great design was to disclose what God was to do in future times, in the various revolutions that were to take place on the earth, until his government should be firmly established, and the principles of his administration should everywhere prevail; and there was a propriety, therefore, in describing the representatives of the church as taking part in this universal praise, and as casting every crown at the feet of Him who sits upon the throne. The crowns are described as "crowned" (Rev 4:4), that is, as triumphant, and as kings (compare Rev 5:10), and they are here represented as casting their crowns at his feet, in token that they owe their triumph to Him. To his providential dealings, to his wise and merciful government, they owe it that they are crowned at all; and there is, therefore, a propriety that they should acknowledge this in a proper manner by placing their crowns at his feet.

*Commentary on the 24 elders noted in Rev 4:4 (Barnes Notes)*

Very various opinions have been entertained in respect to the 24 elders who thus appeared sitting around the throne, and to the question why the number twenty-four is mentioned. Instead of examining those opinions at length, it will be better to present, in a summary manner, what seems to be probable in regard to the intended reference. The following points, then, would appear to embrace all that can be known on this subject:

- (1) These elders have a regal character, or are of a kingly order. This is apparent:
  - (a) because they are represented as sitting on "thrones," and
  - (b) because they have on their heads "crowns of gold."
- (2) They are emblematic. They are designed to symbolize or represent some class of persons. This is clear:
  - (a) because it cannot be supposed that so small a number would compose the whole of those who are in fact around the throne of God, and
  - (b) because there are other symbols there designed to represent something pertaining to the homage rendered to God, as the four living creatures and the angels, and this supposition is necessary in order to complete the symmetry and harmony of the representation.
- (3) They are human beings, and are designed to have some relation to the race of man, and somehow to connect the human race with the worship of heaven. The four living creatures have another design; the angels (Rev 5) have another; but these are manifestly of our race-persons from this world before the throne.
- (4) They are designed in some way to be symbolic of the church as redeemed. Thus, they say (Rev 5:9), "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."
- (5) They are designed to represent the whole church in every land and every age of the world. Thus, they say (Rev 5:9), "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." This shows, further, that the whole representation is emblematic; for otherwise in so small a number-twenty-four-there could not be a representation out of every nation.
- (6) They represent the church triumphant-the church victorious. Thus, they have crowns on their heads; they have harps in their hands (Rev 5:8); they say that they are "kings and priests," and that they will "reign on the earth," Rev 5:10.
- (7) The design, therefore, is to represent the church triumphant-redeemed-saved-as rendering praise and honor to God; as uniting with the hosts of heaven in adoring him for his perfections and for the wonders of his grace; As representatives of the church, they are admitted near to him; they encircle his throne; they appear victorious over every foe; and they come, in unison with the living creatures, and the angels, and the whole universe (Rev 5:13), to ascribe power and dominion to God.
- (8) As to the reason why the number "twenty-four" is mentioned, perhaps nothing certain can be determined. Ezekiel, in his vision (Ezek 8:16; 11:1), saw twenty-five men between the porch and the altar, with their backs toward the temple, and their faces toward the earth-supposed to be representations of the twenty-four "courses" into which the body of priests was divided (1 Chron 24:3-19), with the high priest among them, making up the number twenty-five. It is possible that John in this vision may have designed to refer to the church considered as a priesthood (compare the notes on 1 Peter 2:9), and to have alluded to the fact that the priesthood under the Jewish economy was divided into twenty-four courses, each with a presiding officer, and who was a representative of that portion of the priesthood over which he presided. If so, then the ideas which enter into the representation are these:
  - (a) That the whole church may be represented as a priesthood, or a community of priests-an idea which frequently occurs in the New Testament.
  - (b) That the church, as such a community of priests, is employed in the praise and worship of God-an idea, also, which finds abundant countenance in the New Testament.
  - (c) That, in a series of visions having a designed reference to the church, it was natural to introduce some symbol or emblem representing the church, and representing the fact that this is its office and employment. And

(d) that this would be well expressed by an allusion derived from the ancient dispensation—the division of the priesthood into classes, over each one of which there presided an individual who might be considered as the representative of his class. It is to be observed, indeed, that in one respect they are represented as "kings," but still this does not forbid the supposition that there might have been intermingled also another idea, that they were also "priests." Thus, the two ideas are blended by these same elders in Rev 5:10: "And hath made us unto our God kings and priests." Thus understood, the vision is designed to denote the fact that the representatives of the church, ultimately to be triumphant, are properly engaged in ascribing praise to God. The word "elders" here seems to be used in the sense of aged and venerable men, rather than as denoting office. They were such as by their age were qualified to preside over the different divisions of the priesthood.

### **God is always worthy to be worshipped (11)**

*God is worthy of worship because He is the only One who breaks our bonds (Rev 5:2-5)*

2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

*God is worthy of worship because it is due Him (Ps 29:2)*

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

(Ctrl+Click for [Studies in Revelation Christ's Victory Over the Forces of Darkness](#) by J. Hampton Keathley III)

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

The Bible consistently teaches qualities of God that highlight the immeasurable distance between him and human beings. God is all-knowing (omniscient), for nothing is hidden from him (Jeremiah 23:24). God is eternal, living and reigning forever (Psalm 146:10). God is holy, unstained by any unrighteousness or blemish of sin (Habakkuk 1:13). God is the Almighty (omnipotent), the all-powerful one, far above any human authority or spiritual power (1 Timothy 6:15, 16). Revelation has much to teach us about worship and about the nature of God. In our desire to understand the prophetic message of the book, we sometimes miss these additional insights. The more we know about God, the more we are compelled to worship him and the more genuine our worship becomes. Let us worship God in his holiness, his power, his eternity, and his knowledge. Let us worship the Lord God Almighty.

### **Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

1. We can only be guided by God's wisdom when we are filled with the Spirit of God {Rev. 4:1-3}
2. God has prepared a place for us in heaven (vs. 4)
3. God's majesty is awesome. Nothing on earth compares to His glory (vss. 5-6)
4. God's power extends far beyond the four corners of the earth into the heavens and throughout the universe (vs. 6)
5. All living things were created to worship and glorify God (vss. 8-10)
6. All creation belongs to God (vs. 11)