

Apocalypse Now: Session Five

Him Who Sits on the Throne: What does Revelation tell us about God the Father?

*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.*

- Rev 4:11

*The theology of Revelation is highly theocentric. This, along with its distinctive doctrine of God, is its greatest contribution to New Testament theology. – Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, p. 23*

God Is...

Transcendent

- “a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.” Rev 4:2
 - o The “throne in heaven” locates God’s space outside the created realm.
 - o The “glassy sea” beneath Him (4:6)—God stands above and over the chaos of our world.
- God is “wholly other”
- This means that God is not ‘an old man upstairs’ or an enlarged, super-charged human being.

Immanent

- “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.” Rev 4:4
 - o 12 tribes of Israel + 12 apostles (cf. Rev 21:12-14).
- “And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures.” Rev 4:6b
 - o The number “4” represents something of worldwide scope (see 4:6b-8; 7:1)
 - “Four is also a number of completeness, especially connoting something of universal or worldwide scope.” – Beale, *NIGTC*
 - “Four is also a number of completeness, especially connoting something of universal or worldwide scope.” – Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*
- This means that God is near; “in him we live and move and have our very being,” (Acts 17:28)

Holy

- “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!” Rev 4:8 (cf. Isa 6:3)
 - o “Holy” is the only attribute of God that receives the threefold repetition. (see *The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul)

- “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.” Rev 4:5
 - o The lightning, thunder, and fire communicate not only power, not only fear, but holiness. In the Bible, the holiness of God is *dangerous* for sinners.

Beautiful

- “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.” Rev 4:3 (cf. Ez. 1:26-28)
 - o “John, like Ezekiel, uses such imagery in the attempt to describe the indescribably so that his readers will be struck with the awesome beauty of the Lord. The stones and rainbow emblazon on the readers’ hearts the splendor and loveliness of God himself.” Schreiner, *The Joy of Hearing*, p. 73
- While describing the beauty of the New Jerusalem, John explains that the city possesses “the glory of God” (Rev 21:9-27).
- “Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty.” Isa 33:17
- Consider the many songs found in Revelation (5:13; 7:12; 11:17-18; 14:2-3; 15:3-4)—why songs? Songs and poetry are the perfect medium for expressing delight in beauty.
 - o “Harps” in 5:8; 14:2; 15:2.

Eternal

- “who was and is and is to come!” Rev 4:8b
 - o There are five different variations of this phrase: (Rev 1:4; 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5)
 - “This designation is an interpretation of the divine name YHWH.” – Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*
 - “God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” Ex 3:14
 - God is *A se*—literally, “in of Himself.” He is not dependent on anything external to Himself for His existence. (The doctrine of aseity).
 - God is eternal—He exists outside of time.
 - “who lives forever and ever” Rev 4:9, 10 (cf. 1:18; 5:13; 15:7)
- Compare this also with the designation of “Alpha and Omega” in Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13 and “the first and last” in Rev 1:17, 22:13
- Contrast with the beast: “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction,” (Rev 17:8).

Worthy

- “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.” Rev 4:11
 - o Worship, in Old English was *worthship*—designating something as “worthy.”
 - o God is worthy of our worship in 4:11 because He is the omnipotent creator of everything.
- Who are the 24 elders?
 - o An apocalyptic image of all of God’s people “seated in the heavenly places” (Eph 2:6).
 - o They possess what Jesus promises to those who conquer in chs. 2-3

- White robes (3:5)
 - Crowns (2:10)
 - A throne (3:21)
- What is the only thing the 24 elders do in the book of Revelation? Fall down in worship.
 - “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,” Rev 4:10.
 - Again in 5:8, 5:14; 11:16; 19:4 (also, maybe 7:11)
 - Their falling off their thrones and casting their crowns before the Father reveals their humility and certainty that their status and authority are given by God and belong to Him.

Judge

- “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,” Rev 5:1
- “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” Rev 16:5-6 (cf. Rev 6:9-11)
 - One of the most dominant themes in the book of Revelation is judgment of God poured out on the world.
- “Our thinking goes like this: If there is a God at all, He is certainly not holy. If He is perchance holy, He is not just. Even if He is both holy and just, we need not fear because His love and mercy override His holy justice. If we can stomach His holy and just character, we can rest in one thing: He cannot possess wrath. If we think soberly for five seconds, we must see our error. If God is holy at all, if God has an ounce of justice in His character, indeed if God exists as God, how could He possibly be anything else but angry with us? We violate His holiness; we insult His justice; we make light of His grace. These things can hardly please Him.” – Sproul, *The Holiness of God*

Merciful

- “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.” Rev 5:9-10
- Interestingly, it is the Lamb’s merciful and gracious sacrifice that qualifies Him to be able to open the scroll of judgment.
 - God’s justice and mercy are not opposed to each other.