

Revelation A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #14
Revelation 4:1-11
10/11/2006

**“After this ... the things which shall be hereafter”
The Throne of God in Heaven
Part 3**

And 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.

Last week we concluded by thinking about the recitation of the living creatures who continuously praise God for His holiness. They do this by crying out **“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come”** day and night continuously, without interruption.

If this is a picture of what we can expect when we get to heaven, and I believe it is, then, continuously, forever, there will be this refrain being spoken, constantly, in the forefront and in the background of everything else that is said or is taking place. How different is heaven from this earth on which we live; even how different is this image of both God and heaven than what is commonly presented in the churches of today. Seldom, in the churches around this world, is seen and heard an emphasis upon the holiness of God. Yet, in heaven, this will likely be our first and continuing focus.

Why such an emphasis? one might ask. The answer is both simple and foundational.

God’s holiness underlies and is the foundation for all of God’s other attributes. Since the basic meaning of **“holiness”** is **“otherness,”** it is God’s holiness that makes all of His various other attributes **“other”** or **“different from”** all things that pertain to man and this world. For instance, man loves and God loves, but God’s love is **“other than”** or **“different from”** man’s love. Man is material, of physical material and limited by that physical material to the characteristics of that material, whereas God is Spirit and beyond and unaffected by the limitations of that which is physical material. Man is mortal, God is immortal. Man is temporal, limited to and constrained by time, but God is eternal, timeless, outside of time and unaffected by it, and the illustrations could go on and on.

Thus, it is not surprising that, upon praising God for His Holiness, the creatures then immediately speak of that timeless, eternal nature of God with which Christ repeatedly characterized Himself in His first statements of this revelation of Himself to John, **“Which was, and is, and is to come.”**

By this manner of identifying Himself Christ emphasized His holy nature of being deity and eternal as well as relating Himself to the way that He identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3, **“I AM,”** and many times in His ministry here upon this earth as recorded in the Gospel of John. This, that no man can say of himself, sets Christ apart from man and all that is of this temporal world. He always has been, is now, and always will be eternal in His nature and **“other than”** and outside of time which He created. Therefore, from outside of time, He created time as a characteristic which applies to and both limits and defines all that He created, but has no affect upon Him.

John, who has just been called up from the earth, has left time behind and found himself in the timelessness of heaven and in the presence of the timeless One, Holy God. The description of the indescribable scene is limited and brief, because there is neither earthly words capable of describing such a scene nor earthly minds capable of fully comprehending it should it be described more fully. The brevity of the statement exhibits a sharp contrast between the familiarity of earth and the **“otherness”** of a holy heaven in which is found the holy throne of our holy God.

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However the reader can draw one important conclusion from the emphasis, i.e., the One being described as such is constant. Who He was yesterday, is the same as He is today and will be tomorrow. Everything in His creation changes, but He remains the same. He is the Alpha, the beginning as well as the Omega, the ending. When creation is no more, He still is and ever more shall be.

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

John’s description of the scene continued in verse nine as he told of the worship offered by the living creatures to the One upon the throne: **“glory, honor and thanks.”**

God needs nothing from man but accepts his praise when properly given.

“Glory” doxa (1391) means **“the outward expression of inner reality, the reputation of a thing or that by which something is seen to be known”** is offered by the creatures to God. When God was in the process of introducing Himself to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai upon their deliverance from the pagan culture of Egypt, as He gave them His holy commandments, He allowed them to see His glory. We are told that **“.. Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount, and the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel”** (Exodus 24:15-17). Psalm 19:1 tells us that **“The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handywork.”** In His prayer, recorded in John 17, just before He was to be crucified, Jesus prayed **“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was”** (John 17:4-5). We read in Isaiah 43:7 where God said that **“Everyone that is called by my name ... I have created for my glory”** Furthermore, God told Isaiah in 42:8 **“I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.”**

Now, finally, in heaven, Christ receives the glory and praise from those He created for the purpose of giving Him that glory and He does not have to share it with any who would attempt to steal it from Him!

“Honor” time (5092) means **“respect, reverence, esteem.”** Frequently this word is associated with the word “glory” when God is praised (Rev. 5:12; 7:12). When one sees the “glory of God,” or gains a proper opinion of Who He is, then one naturally gives to God “honor” as he shows respect for God and holds Him in high esteem.

“Thanks” eucharistias (2169) means **“the expression of gratitude to God.”** **“It is the grateful acknowledgement of past mercies”** from God according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary by Dr. Spiros Zodhiates. Gratitude flows from a heart that is aware of God’s gifts being received by an undeserving sinner. The “thanks” looks backward to what God has done in the past for the sinner, which is more fully described in the verses that follow.

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Many times a person expresses the desire to do something for God. According to the pattern of worship described here, there are three things which God wants or accepts from man. In addition to these three things, we are told in Romans 12:1 to **“present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God;”** and in Hebrews 13:15 **“to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name;”** and in 1 Peter 2:5 **“to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”**

It is worth noting that this is the first of three times in the book of Revelation that thanksgiving is offered up to God. This first, 4:9 pertains to Christ as Creator. The second, 7:12, relates to His work as Redeemer and Savior. The third, 11:17, relates to His role as Almighty ruler.

The next phrase, **“to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,”** turns our attention back to the One upon the throne and emphasizes His eternal nature once again, indicating to us that it is very important for us to understand this great truth.

The next verses, vv. 10-11, tell us what the worshippers do as they continue to offer praise to God.

“The 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, Thou 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.”

Notice that when **“the four and twenty elders worship Him that sat on the throne”** they fall down prostrate upon the ground. It is reasonable for us to conclude, that if this is the manner of worship acceptable in heaven, and it is, then we should discover some lessons as to how we should worship God while we are still here on this earth. This manner is certainly harmonious with the words of praise offered God which we saw in verse 9. There, as well as in 5:12 and 7:12, the worshippers offer **“honor;”** which we now understand to be **“respect and reverence”** to God. The prostrating of the worshippers in heaven surely communicate an attitude of reverence and respect. While it may not be necessary to prostrate ourselves upon the ground to worship Him now, though it would surely be acceptable, it certainly seems that worshippers today need to express, in some manner, a like attitude of reverence and respect for the holiness of God. It is not unreasonable to conclude that that when present day **“worshippers”** insist upon disregarding this principle that what they offer is unacceptable to God. When we worship God we are to give unto Him that which is acceptable and pleasing to Him rather than what might be pleasing to ourselves.

Next, we see that the worship was continuous, **“forever and forever.”** It is simply the beginning of something that does not end. Our time in heaven will be a continuous worship service. Many people seem to have distorted ideas about what heaven is like and what they will be doing in heaven. Some of these, if they make it into heaven, may have a big shock waiting on them. It is obvious today that many people do not enjoy worshipping God and have no desire to be in a worship service. Some people, who attend a worship service, want it to be over at a certain set time, as soon as possible. Others will not attend a **“worship service”** unless it is tailored to fit their tastes.

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Some conclusions and observations are in order. First, those who think that they are going to set the agenda in heaven to suit their tastes probably don't really want to go to heaven. God, not any human individual, determines what will be happening in heaven. Don't plan to go to heaven unless you desire to do what God wants done in God's way. **Second**, there are those who think that, when they worship God, they can do whatever pleases them. What we see in the book of Revelation is the very opposite. God determines what He will accept there and likely what He accepts here and now. Nowhere in His holy Word will a person find that God accepts worship that is compromised with and influenced by cultural forms, messages, music, methods, and motivations. Don't plan on going to heaven if you think that you should be able to determine these things because, if God should let you in, you would likely be miserable for eternity.

Next, we see that the worshippers **“cast their crowns before the throne.”** The **“crowns”** were first mentioned in verse 4 and is the word **stephanos** (4735) and refers to **“victors crowns” not to “the crowns of kings.”** Sometimes it was a wreath and sometimes it was a crown of gold that was given to a victorious warrior upon his return home. God used this symbol to illustrate the rewards that await His faithful when they get to heaven. Paul spoke of **“a crown of righteousness”** (2 Timothy 4:8), a **“crown of rejoicing”** (1 Thessalonians 2:19) and other crowns God has for His faithful. The picture in Revelation 4:10 indicates that none of the saints who go to heaven and receive crowns will want to wear them, but will cast them down at the feet of the only One Who deserves a crown, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the worshippers cast their crowns down at His feet they will be crying out, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”**

It's going to be amazing to some that the first thing they praise Christ for is for being the Creator of all things. Many so-called Christians of today have compromised their faith in God's holy Word to accommodate the atheists' position of evolution. Even many who claim to have been miraculously converted by the saving grace and the sacrificial blood of the Lord Jesus Christ claim to be able to accept His miraculous work in making new people out of them, but cannot accept His claim to have created all things.

There are a number of complications which result in the lives of such so-called believers which need to be addressed. The refusal to recognize Christ as Creator leaves a person in the position of living a life with no purpose, no sustaining oversight and power to function and no sense of accountability. If life is simply a cosmic accident then nothing is here for any purpose and there are no resources available outside of one's own abilities. Furthermore, if life is just an evolved accident of chance, then there is no owner of it all and no one to which one must give an account for how it is lived. If these things be true then there is no authority, absolutes, or moral code or principle by which we should live. It is the acceptance of such thinking and teaching that has resulted in a society of chaos and violence seeking blindly for answers that are not existent.

Those who go to heaven will worship God as Creator acknowledging that everything has come from Him, exists because of Him, operates and functions according to His design and returns to Him (Romans 11:36). From the smallest individual microscopic particle of life with its intricate structure to the composite of all of these together in various relationships, even nature testifies loudly that there is a Creator Who brought everything into being with a design and purpose behind each and every thing.

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Not only does nature declare the evidence of a Creator, but man, with his so-called **“free will,”** provides evidence of a Creator. From the time that God planted **“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”** in the Garden of Eden, giving man the freedom to choose with the consequential results of that choice God has demonstrated His design for life. Not only did God give to man the ability to make choices, He also built into man’s freedom the principle of personal responsibility. Man may choose, but he must accept God’s predetermined consequences of those choices. He cannot evade them. However, in testimonial to God’s omniscience and **“holy”** love and grace, God did more. Knowing that man would choose to reject the good for the evil, choose to reject His love for servitude to Satan, God set in motion an escape route for man that He had planned before He created a single thing (Ephesians 1:1-12).

As Creator of all of life, Christ had brought into existence everything, both good and evil (Isaiah 45:7). As means of clarification, when God says in Isaiah 45:7 that He **“creates evil,”** it would have been better translated if it had properly read that He creates **“the distress that comes from evil.”** Nevertheless, man could not choose evil had God not given that freedom to him. Therefore, to sum it all up, God not only created in man the ability to choose, He also created the subsequent consequences. The consequences of choosing good are blessings. The consequences of choosing evil are distresses and damnation. But God did not leave it there and that is why the worshippers are seen praising Him for being Creator because He planned, purposed and provided for sinful man a way of redemption from the consequences of his sin through the blood of Christ. Thus, this doxology of praise for Christ being Creator continues through the next chapter.