

I. The Worship Leaders of Heaven (Rev. 4:6-8)

A. Around the throne John sees 4 angelic creatures that the prophet Isaiah saw 800 years earlier when He was given a vision of the temple. Both Isaiah and John pointed out these breathtaking creatures who offer nonstop worship to the creator of the universe. These angelic beings are not chained to the throne room but voluntarily spending the centuries in constant burning adoration of the enthroned One.

1. Covered with Eyes - They were created and anointed to see and perceive God; forever gazing upon the beautiful One in absolute fascination and wonder. In Scripture, eyes have always been interpreted as a picture of wisdom. Thus, we possibly have the wisest created beings in view here. They have eyes under their wings so that when they are moving around they can still maintain their adoring gaze. (Ps. 119:18; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:18; Rev. 3:18)
2. Four Different Faces - I believe the seraphim are reflecting the glory of God they are beholding. Each living creature burns with the reality of God they are reflecting.
 - Face of a Lion - Sovereign King
 - Face of an Ox / Calf - Suffering Servant
 - Face of a Man - Heavenly Bridegroom
 - Face of an Eagle - Almighty God
3. They do not rest – Many assume that they are mandated to offer insistent worship and adoration because it is their assignment. However, the scriptures are clear that God insists that humans and angels serve Him voluntarily. These creatures offer nonstop ministry to the Lord because gazing upon His beauty and glory is what they desire to do. They proclaim through their song that He is worthy of such perpetual praise and adoration and happily serve His vast worth. (Ps. 27:4, 84; Eze. 3:14; Lk 10:38-42; Phil. 1:23)
4. Burning Ones – The name Seraphim literally means “The Burning Ones”. These creatures resonate so intensely with the fire of God’s affections that they appeared to be burning when Isaiah saw them. As you live a lifestyle of beholding the God of burning love your heart will be transformed into the image you behold. (Lk. 11:33-36; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col 3:10 “Beholding unto Becoming Principle”)

*“If some watcher or holy one who has spent his glad centuries by the sea of fire were to come to earth, how meaningless to him would be the ceaseless chatter of the busy tribes of men. How strange to him and how empty would sound the flat, stale, and profitless words heard in the average pulpit from week to week. And we're such a one to speak on earth would he not speak of God? Would he not charm and fascinate his hearers with rapturous descriptions of the Godhead? And after hearing him could we ever again consent to listen to anything less than theology, the doctrine of God? Would we not thereafter demand of those who would presume to teach us that they speak to us from the mount of divine vision or remain silent altogether?” - A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy**

II. The Primary Theme of Heavenly Worship

- A. Worship is a response to revelation. As a response to that realm of beauty they are beholding, they cry, “Holy, holy, holy.” This seems to be the foundational song in the temple of heaven. This is the one they sing night and day. There are fourteen different hymns in the book of Revelation. I believe those hymns will be sung through the ages, but this one seems to be the central song that all the others flow from.
- B. To be holy means “to be totally separated from.” There are two primary uses of “Holy” in the scriptures. One is to be separated from everything sinful. The other is to be separated from everything created. I believe they are singing of the latter meaning. They are not saying, “You are pure, and sinless.” They are saying, “You are separate from everything. You are infinitely superior. Your beauty is beyond anything any of us can understand or see.”
 - 1. In the Jewish culture of the scriptures, the double repetition of a word is meant to emphasize. When you find the rare threefold repetition of a word in scripture it is meant to designate ultimate priority and attention. The quality of God felt by these creatures in his presence is fearfully awesome and wondrous to experience. Isaiah tells us that they cover their faces as they are overcome by the radiance of the revelation they are receiving. (Ps. 139:6, 145:3; Job 11:7-9, 26:7-14; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:8)

III. They Give Glory, Honor, and Thanks

- A. When the four living creatures worship, their worship provokes worship. Every time the four living creatures worship the beauty of God, the 24 elders likewise fall down before Him out of reverence. As the revelation of God’s glory hits them afresh they respond out of raw conviction rather than religious structure. (Rev. 1:17)

1. You are Worthy – We must understand that the angelic hosts worship Him not for what He has done personally for them but rather because of who He is. The Elders declare that this display of wholehearted radical worship that John is witnessing is not only perpetuated because of the revelation God is giving them but because He is worthy of it. He has the preeminence in their hearts because they see Him rightly. They see ongoing night and day worship and adoration not as a mandate but the only reasonable response to who He is. (Ps. 18:3)
2. To Receive – They sing that He is worthy to receive the all the glory, honor, and power of the entire creation. They proclaim that if anyone has any of these things to give that they should give it to Him because only He is truly worthy to receive those things. (1 Chron. 16:28-29)
3. For you created all things – The elders look at the One on the throne and the created order all around Him and declare that it didn't just happen by chance. He thoughtfully and perfectly wrought all things we know into existence. The life that is in them came from the One they behold. Their ability to feel overwhelmed at the knowledge of God came from Him. All the reality around them and in them is only there because of who He is. (Gen. 1:1; Jhn 1:1-3)
4. By your will they exist – Why do you exist and what is the point of your existence? I was once asked this question and had no clue how to answer it. The answer to that question is found in this song. It's only by His will and for His pleasure that He created all things and why they exist. God wanted you so He made you, and that's why He has plans for you. The Westminster confession of faith concerning the point of life is this, that man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. (Rom 11:36; Col. 1:16)

“There is a throne in heaven that no one can occupy but you, and there is a crown in heaven that no other head can wear but yours, and there is a part in the eternal song that no voice can ever compass but yours, and there is a glory to God that would be wanting if you did not come to render it, and there is a part of infinite majesty and glory that would never be reflected unless you should be there to reflect it!” (Charles Spurgeon)

IV. They Cast their Crowns

- A. When the crowned elders cast their crowns at His feet, they humbly acknowledge His sovereignty and His right to receive worship. Casting their crowns at His feet symbolizes the willing subjection of their power to His superior authority.

B. Casting their crowns simply acted out their declaration, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.” If God was worthy of the glory and honor and power, then He should get the crown. They unanimously throw their achievements back at His feet knowing that everything they are and have come from Him and only He deserves the Glory for their achievements.

1. The Apostle Paul said he wanted to make sure he did nothing that would result in his losing his reward. Jesus and Paul in turn used rewards as a motivation to urge Christians to serve Jesus Christ faithfully. These factors have created problems for some believers. Is it not selfish to want to gain a reward? Is this not an unworthy motive for living the Christian life? I believe the answer lies in this verse. (Mat. 6:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:10-15, 9:27)

2. Here the 24 elders cast their crowns at the feet of the Father in worship. Since a crown is something we will give back to the Lord in worship, the desire for a crown need not be a selfish motivation. Indeed the desire to present one's life work of faithful service as a gift to the Savior is a very unselfish and God-honoring motive.

V. Chapter 4 in Summery

A. The total impression of this highly symbolic vision that John received is very clear even though the interpretation of some of the symbols may not be obvious. The created hosts who see God rightly will be undone in love and adoration for who He is. They will give Him the honor He so rightly deserves and insist that all created order does the same.

B. We need to see all that follows in the rest of the book of Revelation in the light of the character and beauty of God seen in the temple. He is perfect in all His ways, burning with love for us, always acts in merciful kindness, righteousness, and purity. He is all powerful, eternal, and sovereign. He is the author of your life and all the life around you. Everything exists because of His will and for His pleasure. He is the only One worthy of the attention and affection of humanity.

C. This is our anchor to help us accept and understand the coming revelation of all that He will do in His perfect plan to bring all the inhabitants of the earth to knowledge of God. Thus eradicating everything that hinders the fullness of love, that Jesus alone may have the preeminence in everything.