

REVELATION – SERMON 27

THE WONDER AND WORSHIP IN HEAVEN

Revelation 4:5-8

INTRODUCTION

- “Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that majesty which philosophers call the First Cause but which we call Our Father Which Art in Heaven.” – A.W. Tozer
- How little of what is labelled “worship” today is truly worship!
- For us to be true worshippers, we need to grasp the supreme majesty, power and holiness of God Almighty.
- In Revelation 4-5, the veil of heaven is drawn back, and we earth-bound mortals are given a privileged view into heaven, into the temple in heaven, and into the very throne room of heaven.
- We are given, within the constraints of human language, a description of the glory of God upon his throne.
- But as well as that, we are shown the response of those dwelling in heaven to God’s majesty, and it is one of humble worship.
- These chapters show us what true worship looks like – reverent, intelligent, God-focussed.
- Chapters 4-5 show the scene in heaven following the rapture of the saints, and are a prelude to the judgments upon the earth that begin in chapter 6

I. THE CELESTIAL BRILLIANCE RADIATING FROM THE THRONE (5-6)

A. Lightnings, thunderings, voices

1. These *proceed* from out of the throne, as representations of God’s power and glory
2. God’s presence at Sinai was accompanied by thunders and lightnings (Exodus 19:16; 20:18)
3. These are used as emblems of God’s judgment upon unrighteousness (Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18)
4. Judgment is associated with God’s throne (Psalm 9)

5. The accompanying voices may be expressions of the specific judgments of God (cf. Revelation 10:3-4)
6. Note that the lighting, thundering and voices are the counterpart to the rainbow; the one speaks of God's mercy and grace, the other of God's justice and judgment

B. Seven lamps

1. This refers to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead (see 1:4)
2. The number seven indicates fulness (Isaiah 11:2-3)
3. Usually, the Spirit is not seen, but occasionally he assumes a visible form (Matthew 3:16; Acts 2:3)
4. The lamps indicate the Spirit's illumination
5. The burning indicates judgment (Malachi 4:1)
6. These seven Spirits of God are "sent forth into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6)
7. While the Spirit is the *Comforter* (John 14:26), in the day of the Lord's wrath he will be the *Consumer*, the instrument of God's judgment

C. A sea of glass (cf. Exodus 24:9-10; Revelation 15:2)

1. It points to the abundant light of God (Daniel 2:22; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 1:5)
2. It points to separation
3. It points to purity – the laver (Exodus 30:18-21; 1 Kings 7:23-27)
 - a. The laver of cleansing is a type of God's word (John 15:3; 17:17; Ephesians 5:26)
 - b. But in heaven, the sea will be solid crystal – there will be no need for any more washing from sin there!

II. THE CURIOUS BEASTS ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE (6-8)

A. Four beasts

1. The Greek word for "beasts" is *zoa*, and indicates living creatures or beings (Ezekiel 1:5,13)
2. The number four represents creation and the earth

B. They are angelic beings

1. They resemble the seraphim in their six wings, and in their refrain (Isaiah 6:2-3)

2. They more closely resemble the Ezekiel's cherubim (Ezekiel 1:4-14 10:14-15, 20-27)
 - a. They differ in the number of wings (Ezekiel's have four)
 - b. And in the number of faces (Ezekiel's each have four)
3. The cherubim are found close to God's throne (Ezekiel 28:14)
4. They have a guarding and covering role (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18; 36:35)
5. They are involved in worshipping God his holiness and power
6. They are involved with the judgment of the tribulation (Revelation 6:1,7)

C. Their features

1. Full of eyes – indicating intelligence, alertness and vigilance (Psalm 11:4)
2. Four likenesses – lion, calf, man, eagle
 - a. These likenesses represent different aspects of earthly creatures – the lion is chief of wild animals; the calf of the tame animals; the eagle of the birds; and man is chief over all
 - b. The four likenesses also reflect the fourfold portrayal of Christ in the gospels

MATTHEW	KING	LION
MARK	SERVANT	OX
LUKE	MAN	MAN
JOHN	GOD	EAGLE

3. Six wings – indicating reverence, humility and obedience (see Isaiah 6:2)

III. THE CONTINUAL BLESSING RENDERED AT THE THRONE (8)

A. Perpetual worship

1. They rest not day or night
 - a. God's people are to praise without ceasing (Psalm 34:1; Hebrews 13:15)
 - b. God's people are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 - c. God's people are to serve without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8; 2 Timothy 4:2)

B. God's holiness

1. This matches the cry of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3
 2. In Hebrew, double repetition of a word is for emphasis, but a threefold repetition denotes the superlative
 3. This is an emphatic call to acknowledge the infinite holiness of God
 4. The judgments that will follow in Revelation flow from God's perfect holiness, and will result his holiness filling not just the heavens, but the whole earth also
- C. God's omnipotence
1. "Lord God Almighty" emphasised the power of God
 2. "Almighty" is used nine times in Revelation
 3. As Lord over all, he has sovereign right to do as he pleases with his creation (Psalm 115:3)
- D. God's eternity
1. This same wording, though in a different sequence, is used in 1:4,8
 2. Jehovah is the "I AM", the self-existing one, from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning or end

CONCLUSION

1. Too many people have improper views of God, who see him only as the compassionate and kind God, but not the "great and dreadful God" (Daniel 9:4)
2. They love the rainbow of his mercy, but not the thunders of his judgment
3. Those who know the terror of the Lord will persuade others to flee from the coming wrath (2 Corinthians 5:10-11)
4. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people
5. Are you prepared for heaven, by being justified by faith in Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit?
6. It has been said, "they who would enjoy heaven must have some experimental acquaintance with the language of its inhabitants."
7. Do you speak the language of Canaan, and do your joys lie in that world, or this?