

EARTHLY LESSONS FROM THE THRONE ROOM OF HEAVEN

– REVELATION 4 –



JESUS TELLS US TO PRAY LIKE THIS

- We have for the last several weeks looked at “how things are in the church of Jesus Christ on earth” as we studied Christ’s letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. Now Revelation 4 begins with John looking and seeing a door standing open in heaven. Then ... next thing you know, John is before the throne of God.
- I’m not sure when or why but at some point in my study Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:9-10 that we were to pray that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven came to mind. And since we are to pray in that way, it seems that Revelation 4 is a pretty good place to see “how things are done in heaven” so we know just how to pray for this.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME. YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

(MATTHEW 6:9-10 ESV)

SO LET’S FIND OUT HOW THINGS ARE DONE IN HEAVEN.

On Earth ...

I. We need to pray like this.

- (Matthew 6:9–12 NLT) Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today the food we need, 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

II. So we must fully understand how his will is done in heaven.

- We must reject the status quo of earth. Status quo ... the existing condition or state of affairs, especially regarding social or political issues; the current situation; the way things are now; the situation as it currently exists.
- Our text this morning forces us to view the status quo of earth in contrast with the status quo of heaven.

Our minds must be transformed to value and pursue the status quo of heaven where God is God—Sovereign Lord. We must turn away from and reject the status quo on earth.

- (Romans 1:25 ESV) Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

As It Is in Heaven ...

I. A THRONE STANDS IN HEAVEN, 4:1-2A.

- (Revelation 4:1–2a ESV) After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven.

We find the word throne used forty-three times in sixteen of the twenty-two chapters of Revelation. And we find accounts of the throne in various places in Scripture always associated with the sovereignty and glory of God.

*****Jewish rabbis in ancient times seldom described God's throne for fear of desecrating the divine name. They were forbidden to speak openly about heavenly

mysteries, and those who spoke about the throne ran the risk of profaning the Deity. Hence, few rabbis dared to write publicly on this topic. But John is given the honor of ascending to the throne room, which is the very presence of God, and relating what he saw. [Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Vol. 20, pp. 184–185). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.]

- (Ezekiel 1:26–28 ESV) And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. 28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.
- (Ezekiel 10:1 ESV) Then I looked, and behold, on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in appearance like a throne.
- (1 Kings 22:19 ESV) And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left.”
- Exodus 24:9–10 ESV) Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

II. THERE IS ONE SEATED ON THE THRONE, 4:2-3.

- (Revelation 4:2–3 ESV) At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. 3 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.

*****The best explanation is that he probably did not intend an anthropomorphic representation. Portraying the glory of God was the objective, not a detailed description of the Father's appearance. [Thomas, R. L. (1992). *Revelation 1-7: an exegetical commentary* (p. 340). Chicago: Moody Publishers.]

*****Walter Scott says of this theophany, "His essential glory cannot, of course, be communicated even to the most exalted of creatures. God dwells in light unapproachable ... But what can be witnessed by creatures is displayed." [Patterson, P. (2012). *Revelation*. (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (Vol. 39, p. 151). Nashville, TN: B&H.]

III. THE ONE SEATED ON THE THRONE IS THE LORD GOD THE ALMIGHTY, 4:4-8.

- (Revelation 4:4-8 ESV) 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. 5 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, 6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. 8 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!"

IV. THE ONE SEATED ON THE THRONE IS PROCLAIMED TO BE HOLY AND ETERNAL, 4:8.

- (Revelation 4:8 ESV) 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!"

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND IS AND IS TO COME."

EXCURSUS: How do we live lives of holiness? It certainly must begin with obedience. A look at "The Lord's Prayer" in relation to living our lives before the holiness and majesty and sovereignty of the Lord God Almighty.

- (Matthew 6:9-12 ESV) Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

"YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

- We are to pray that the Father's name may be kept holy.
- We are to pray that the kingdom of God would become the reality of our lives.
- We are to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- We are to pray for our daily provision.
- We are to pray for forgiveness of our sin-debts and to forgive the sin-debts of others.

What do we learn? There are no sinners and no sin in heaven so how does this relate to doing his will on earth as it is in heaven? Because it is God's will that we forgive. Whether heaven or earth ... doing God's will means obeying him ... means honoring him ... means bringing glory to his name.

On earth then a major part of doing God's will is forgiving others as God forgives us.

- (Ephesians 4:32 ESV) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- (Colossians 3:13 ESV) Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Refusing to forgive in this way is a serious violation of the will of God. If a person (*especially a believer*) wants to have a godly impact on contemporary culture, then what a great place to start—Let's make sure that we are doing God's will by forgiving as he forgave us in Christ.

As the redeemed in heaven we will never again know sin, but we will forever know forgiveness, and we will understand the holiness of God as never before imagined.

- (Ephesians 1:7-8 ESV) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.

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.

- (Ephesians 2:5–7 ESV) Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

V. ALL OF THOSE AROUND THE THRONE WORSHIP THE ONE WHO IS SEATED ON THE THRONE, 4:9-11.

- (Revelation 4:9–11 ESV) And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 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, saying, 11 “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.”
 - A. The living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne.
 - B. The twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne.
 - C. The twenty-four elders profess the worthiness of God to receive glory and honor and power.
 - D. He is worthy to receive glory and honor and power because he created all things and sustains all things.
 - i. Isn't it so very interesting that our Lord and God is deemed worthy here by the redeemed host of heaven for his role as Creator and Sustainer.
 - ii. Everything that has been created has been created by the will of God.
 - iii. What a rebuke this is to those who refuse to accept a literal interpretation of Genesis and instead hold to a God-created-plus-evolution-helped account of creation.
 - iv. Those who can proclaim with their whole heart ... “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come” ... have absolutely no problem believing the written account of creation in the word of God.
- (Genesis 1:1 ESV) In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- (Exodus 20:11 ESV) For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- (Nehemiah 9:6 ESV) You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.
- (Psalm 33:6–8 ESV) By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
- (Psalm 96:5–9 ESV) For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. 6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! 9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!
- (Isaiah 42:5–6 ESV) Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.”
- (Isaiah 45:5–7 ESV) I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. 7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.