

He Who is Worthy

Revelation 4:6b-11

Introduction

We live in a day when worship is often treated casually—but Scripture makes it clear that God does not take worship lightly. And yet, many of us rarely stop to consider what is actually taking place in heaven right now... what true worship really looks like before the throne of God.

Last week, we were given a glimpse into that throne room, where everything centers on the One who sits upon the throne—surrounded by splendor, power, and unshakable sovereignty. But as John’s vision continues, our attention now shifts from the throne itself to the worship that surrounds it.

After the Lord delivered Israel from the clutches of Pharaoh by parting the Red Sea, Moses and the people sang a song of praise. At the center of that song is this question: “**Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?**” (Exod. 15:11). It is here that we are reminded why we exist—not for ourselves, but for God, whose holiness sets Him apart from all else.

Scripture repeatedly shows us what happens when that holiness is not regarded. Nadab and Abihu approached God in worship on their own terms—and they were consumed (Lev. 10:1–2). Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark—and he was struck down (2 Sam. 6:6–7). These are not isolated incidents. They are warnings. Worship that disregards the holiness of God is not merely deficient—it is dangerous. For as the Lord has said, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16).

And it is precisely this holiness—the holiness that cannot be ignored, redefined, or approached on our terms—that fills the throne room of heaven in Revelation 4, where unceasing worship rises before the One who is “holy, holy, holy.” The worship we see in Revelation 4 is not casual, and it is not optional—it is the only right response to who God is. So if Revelation 4 shows us what true worship looks like in heaven, then the question we must ask is this: *Why is God so worthy of that kind of worship?*

We Worship the LORD Because There is No One Like Him (v. 6a)

Revelation 4 shows us that the experience of God’s presence is not rooted in what we feel, nor is it produced by the latest worship song—it is grounded in the truth of who God has revealed Himself to be in His Word.

Do you remember what I said about the sea of glass before the throne of God? The sea represents chaos and opposition to God's purposes, and it is from the sea that the beast comes. Yet here, before the throne, the sea is stilled, reminding us that what threatens creation elsewhere is powerless in His presence. In the presence of the One on the throne is where the redeemed find shalom (peace).

What John sees in Revelation 4 is not only a display of power—it is a revelation of who God is. He is the Lord Almighty who rules over all things. He is a covenant-keeping God who keeps His promises. And He is a worship-worthy God before whom all of heaven bows down. And what is heaven's response? **“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...”** He is worthy—not because of what He gives, but because of who He is.

There is only one other place in Revelation where the sea of glass is referenced, and it appears in Revelation 15—the fourth of the seven heavenly throne-room scenes in John's apocalypse. There, John describes the same sea of glass, but with an added detail: **“And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands”** (v. 2).

At the Red Sea, God's presence stood between His people and their enemies—bringing light to one and judgment to the other (Exod. 14:19–20). In Revelation, that same reality is intensified as the sea itself is mingled with fire (Rev. 15:2)—symbolically pointing us back to Exodus 14, where God prevented Egypt from pursuing Israel (Exod. 14:24–25). After allowing Pharaoh and his army to begin crossing the parted sea, He then consumed the enemies of God by bringing the waters of the Red Sea upon them (Exod. 14:26–28).

This connection is not incidental. The redeemed stand beside the sea with harps in their hands and sing what John calls **“the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb”** (v. 3). Just as Israel stood on the far side of the Red Sea and sang of their deliverance, so now the people of God stand victorious and sing once more—only this time, their deliverance is final.

And just as the plagues of Egypt preceded Israel's redemption, so here the song is sung on the threshold of judgment, just before the seven bowls of wrath are poured out—judgments that unmistakably echo the plagues that fell upon Egypt. For now, let's focus on a single verse from the song Israel sang after crossing the Red Sea: **“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?”** (Exod. 15:11).

In Revelation 15:3–4, a similar song is taken up and directed to the Lamb: **“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”** What

began as a song of deliverance at the Red Sea becomes, in Revelation, a song of final redemption before the throne—and at the center of both songs is the same unchanging truth: there is no one like Him.

We Worship the LORD Because He is the Creator of All (vv. 6b-7)

We are now introduced to four living creatures whose praise echoes that of the seraphim in Isaiah 6, who declare of the One on the throne: “**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory**” (Isa. 6:3). Like the seraphim, these creatures have six wings, but unlike them, they are described as being full of eyes in front and behind. These eyes symbolize unceasing awareness—nothing escapes their sight as they live in continual service before their Creator. At the same time, each creature is distinct, representing a different realm of creation and reflecting the goodness of the One who made all things.

There are four creatures because they represent the fullness of creation, yet each highlights a distinct category of created life. The creature like a lion represents the wild animals—strength, majesty, and power. The creature like an ox represents domesticated animals—service, endurance, and strength under authority. The creature with the face of a man represents humanity—intelligence, reason, and the image of God. The creature like an eagle in flight represents the birds of the air—swiftness and dominion in the skies. Together, these four living creatures represent the strongest, wisest, most powerful, and most majestic forms of created life—and all of them are oriented toward the worship of their Creator.

Some scholars have also noted a possible connection between these four living creatures and the way Israel was arranged in the wilderness. In Numbers 2, the twelve tribes were divided into four groups and positioned around the tabernacle, with the presence of God at the center. Later Jewish tradition suggests that each group bore a distinct image—such as a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle—images that closely resemble the creatures described here. If this connection is valid, it adds another layer of meaning: the living creatures would not only represent the fullness of creation, but also reflect the people of God gathered in ordered worship around His presence. In that sense, they may point to humanity as it was always meant to be—a community centered on God and devoted entirely to His glory.¹

Whether these creatures are the cherubim described elsewhere in Scripture or a distinct class of heavenly beings, the point remains clear: they represent all of created life, and they perform the very function that all of creation was designed to fulfill—which is worship. And like the seraphim, they never cease to say: “**Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!**” (v. 8).

We Worship the LORD Because He is Perfectly Holy (v. 8)

The declaration of the four living creatures is not that He is love—though He most certainly is. Nor do they declare that He is just, though everything around the throne testifies to His perfect

¹ See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 331; cf. Jewish traditions in Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*.

justice. They do not highlight any of His other attributes. Instead, they declare the one attribute that lies at the very core of all that He is—His holiness. And they declare it to the highest degree. He is not merely “holy,” nor even “holy, holy.” No—our God is: “Holy, holy, holy!” This is the only attribute of God raised to the third degree in all of Scripture.

But what does it mean that God is holy? To be holy is to be set apart and separate from all that is sinful, impure, or morally imperfect. As it relates to God, there is nothing like Him in all of creation, and there is nothing in Him that is flawed, corrupt, or deficient. God’s holiness is the beauty of all that He is. Stephen Charnock rightly said, “Holiness is the beauty of all God’s attributes.”² Brothers and sisters, it is God’s holiness that makes Him glorious—it is what makes His justice just, His mercy merciful, and His power pure.

This is why the worship of God is both serious and dangerous. As Michael Horton argues in his book *In the Face of God*, the danger is not in drawing near to God—the danger is in doing so on our own terms. Nadab and Abihu approached God on their own terms—and they were consumed (Lev. 10:1–3). Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the Ark, assuming his hand was cleaner than the dirt—and he was struck down (2 Sam. 6:6–7). Ananias and Sapphira were more concerned with their image than God’s glory—and they too fell dead (Acts 5:1–11). Why? Because the holiness of God cannot be approached casually, on our own terms, or treated as common.

And, just in case you are tempted to think that these examples are extreme and ought not be taken too seriously, consider the way Jesus taught us to pray: **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”**

Jesus did not say to recite this prayer (though that is okay), but to pray “like this.” We are to begin with something like: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name.” That first petition is not one request among many—it is the foundation of them all, just as holiness is for the character of the Lord God Almighty! Every other request modeled for us in our Lord’s prayer flows from it and serves it:

Your kingdom come... for the hallowing of your name.

Your will be done... for the hallowing of your name.

Give us this day our daily bread... for the hallowing of your name.

Forgive us as we forgive others... for the hallowing of your name.

Lead us not into temptation... for the hallowing of your name.

Deliver us from evil... for the hallowing of your name.

Do you see it? We exist for the renown of God’s holy name in every area and part of our lives because He is holy, holy, holy! This is exactly what we see in Revelation 4. Heaven is not centered on man but on God. He is the Creator, and we are the creature. He reigns from heaven,

² Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (1682; various modern editions)

and we are on earth. He is eternally sufficient, and we are utterly dependent upon Him. All that we do—how we live, how we pray, how we worship—is to be shaped and motivated by one great purpose: that God’s name would be hallowed! As His Word reminds us, **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen”** (Rom. 11:36).

Only when God becomes the center of your universe will you begin to see your life rightly. And only then will you experience the kind of joy and satisfaction you were created for. At the center of that reality is the question sung in victorious celebration by Moses and the rest of Israel: **“Who is like you O LORD... majestic in holiness?”** (Exod. 15:11)

We Worship the LORD Because He Alone is Worthy (vv. 9-11)

Notice the response of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. They fall down before Him who is seated on the throne. Their posture shows us the proper response to God’s holiness—not pride, but surrender. The twenty-four elders lay down their crowns because they recognize that whatever authority, honor, or reward they possess ultimately belongs to the One on the throne.

In response to the declaration that our unchanging God is “Holy, holy, holy...,” the elders proclaim: **“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.”** Everything that exists does so because God wills it. That means your life is not random, nor did it come by chance. You were created by Him and for Him—and the only right response is to lay down whatever you are holding onto and give Him the glory He deserves.

Listen—if you approach God on your terms, you will never experience Him as you were created to. Your way of worship will always lead you to your idols and away from the living God. But when you see Him for who He truly is—holy, holy, holy—you will do what heaven does: you will bow, you will surrender, and you will worship.

Heaven is not confused about who it is that sits on the throne. Heaven is not distracted by lesser glories. Heaven is not divided by that which does not last. All of heaven is fixed on one reality that outweighs everything else infinitely more: God is holy, and He is worthy of it all!

One day, you will join this scene that we are given in Revelation 4. One day, you will stand before the One who sits on the throne. The only question is this: Will you bow before Him now in worship, or will you bow before Him then in judgment?

If you really want to experience God, if you really want to live your life for that which will last and which matters, then be determined in your heart to do this: Turn from lesser things by giving God what heaven already declares—glory, honor, and all that you are. Why? Because there is no one like Him. Because He is the Creator. Because He is holy. And because He alone is worthy.