

True Worship: Seeing God As He Is

Text: Revelation 4.1–5.14

Theme: God is to be worshiped as the Almighty Creator Redeemer that He is

Introduction — Hebrews 11.23–27

- Moses, as young man, had it all
- raised in Pharaoh's palace as son of Pharaoh
- best education, best clothing, best food, best of world at that time
- yet, he found himself fleeing Egypt for his very life's sake
- found his way to humble shepherd's home; took up shepherding sheep in wilderness
- then God made Himself known in powerful manner to Moses
- told: you will be the one to bring My people out of bondage to land I'm providing
- then, this same Moses, used of God, brought Pharaoh to his knees
- and Moses led Israel out of Egypt

God provided food, water, safety for His people

- yet still these stiff-necked Israelites rebelled against Almighty God
- God judged them, but Moses interceded on their behalf

What would you have asked God for in that situation?

- restoration to good life as you once knew it?
- portion of all the good things you once had at fingertips?
- honor of being in line to throne of powerful nation of Egypt?
- or, in spite of serving as a shepherd and finding yourself leading millions of Jews out
- would you ask for an easier task? A better people to lead? An easier path?

We know what Moses asked though: Exodus 33.18

- *"Please show me Your glory"* — a singularly simple request
- generations later, writer of Hebrews tells us of Moses' faith
- tells us what his request did for him, what God's answer to that request did for him
- *"By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."*

(Hebrews 11:27 ESV)

In thick underbrush, deep in South American jungle, young pygmy boy holds perfectly still

- stands before a statue
- boy's mother lies sick with fever that will take her life if he doesn't obey
- tribe's shaman guided him to this sacred site to obtain healing for his mother
- shaman's word is life to the tribe
- so boy stands stock still, hoping his visit to this shrine pays off

Young female executive, after battle with second-guessing, gives in

- she takes \$2,700 business suit to check out and pulls out Platinum credit card
- she knows it only has a \$3,000 limit and hope it clears with this purchase
- she tries to act natural, as clerk hands her the receipt to sign
- "My, won't someone be looking fabulous tonight?"
- to which the young woman replies, "Nah, I just liked the color"
- truth is, she's swimming in debt, in spite of husband begging to stay within budget
- yet she's convinced trappings of success are proof of success

- and she wants to keep climbing a ladder before her

Pastor settles into chair at dining room table, wife brings Sunday dinner out

- “Your sermon was great today, honey; did you get any feedback?” she asks
- minister closes his eyes as if he needs to think hard on his answer
- “Yes, I think a couple of people responded favorably to it”
- conversation moves on, but pastor knows better
- fact is, he’d received more compliments today than in many a Sunday prior
- he was running them through his mind as his wife droned on about something

A pygmy, a young executive, and a preacher...sounds like a good joke is coming on, doesn't it

- as different as they may seem to be on the surface, look deeper and see common thread
- each of them is looking for something; hunt for fulfillment, but not finding it
- to quote the great philosopher, Bono, of U2 fame, “They still haven't found what they're looking for”

What will it take to pry you free from the world & love of things of this world?

- refer to freedom from a worldly point of view
- what will it take to free your, heart, soul, and mind from this?
- most of are thinking right now, “Lord, you're the treasure that I seek”
- trouble is, in back of our minds, we're also thinking, “but there's a lot of cool stuff out there”
- so, what will it take to free you from world's idolatries, allurements that seek to drag you away?
- the world offers a false perspective on nearly everything in this life
- world assumes there is no god, no revelation of clear truth, that no such thing as final judgment

So, what will it take? What is our great need of the day as Christians?

- Revelation 4 & 5 tell us, quite simply: it will take seeing God as He is
- beholding God will break chains of idolatry
- when you see God, all other lures & temptations exposed as worthless and unworthy of trust
- seeing God for who He is purifies you from immorality
- how? By seeing all the beauty and faithfulness of the all-glorious God
- the ugliness of sin lies bare and naked and you now only want the vision of God Almighty

This is our greatest need and I believe it is, in large part, why Rev 4 & 5 are here where they are

- God is the world's Creator and Redeemer
- those who see Him, come to know Him, trust Him with everything they are & have, worship Him
- want to do two simple things in our time this morning
- first, see God as He is, not just in Revelation, but as John knows in OT also
- see the glory, the beauty, the wonder, the awe-inspiring God that He is
- then, we'll look quickly at the ways that God and His Christ are praised in Rev 4 & 5
- then, Lord willing, over the next four Sundays, we'll continue to look to Word regarding worship
- here, this morning, we see who it is that we worship
- but God has not left us to our own devices when it comes to the worship we offer Him

But for now, let's come to the task at hand...

I. SEEING GOD AS HE IS

- mentioned when we started out in this book, John uses the OT widely
- he never seems to quote directly from it, but it saturates nearly everything here
- Rev 4 & 5 are no exception to this
- John saw these visions, thought about them a great deal, carefully chose what he would write
- even the details he presents, are influenced by his knowledge of God's Word
- as the Spirit carries him along, as God breathes His words from His mouth into John...
- he connects us with visions from Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel

1. The One seated upon a throne

- Ezekiel 1.1 says: *"...the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God."*
- sounds amazing familiar to 4.1, does it not? *"...behold, a door standing open in heaven!"*
- then, when we read 4.2: *"...a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne..."*
- we're taken back to Isaiah's vision in the temple
- Isaiah 6.1: *"I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up..."*
- but Ezekiel adds to this also
- *"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."*

(Ezekiel 1:26 ESV)

2. The beauty of that scene

- we saw, in Rev 4.3 that "around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald"
- John knows that Ezekiel 1.28 describes something very similar
- *"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 1:28 ESV)

- this beauty of the One upon the throne is not only breath-taking; it is awe-full as well
- *"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,"*

(Revelation 4:5 ESV)

- this too was seen by Ezekiel, for he describes this way: "fire flashing forth continually"
- not only is the glory and radiant beauty breath-taking & filled with awe, it is expansive
- hear Ezekiel once again
- *"Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads."*

(Ezekiel 1:22 ESV)

- John simply says, "before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal"

3. The God of creation worshiped by His creatures

- I won't take as long here, but John was given to see
- twenty-four elders, four living creatures with features that represented all creatures on earth
- then there are seraphim and perhaps 100s of thousands of angels, all worshipping God
- Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel record very similar things

4. This is biblical worship

- John describes the worship in heaven in biblical language
- it wasn't just about the fantastic and experiential that John wrote
- he wrote biblically about something taking place unto the One upon the throne
- this means that John was using a biblical worldview
- not a worldly perspective, not a human perspective, but a biblical one
- true worship of the Holy One is to not only be seen through a biblical lens
- it is to be conducted using that same filter: use the Bible to instruct our worship
- if we're trying to use the world's eyes and ears to shape our worship, we're in trouble already
- we'll try the world's methods, the world's systems, the world's gimmicks, the world's tricks
- following the world in order to worship the One who created the world is unbiblical
- we've fallen short before we've even begun

5. This worship lets us know God

- we have to know the Bible in order to know God
- we have to know the Bible and God in order to know how He prescribes us to worship
- if we fail at this, we'll worship any ol' way we please
- we'll use what makes us feel good, comfortable, safe
- we'll simply let our emotions rule over our hearts rather than the other way around
- we'll judge each Sunday's worship by this standard: "How did YOU feel about the worship?"
- if we allow Scripture & knowledge of God guide and instruct us how to worship, then different question will be asked
- rather than "How did it make YOU FEEL?" We'll ask "Did this please God?"
- you may think that sounds subjective, but it's not...if you start with the Bible
- if you know God, you know what He's told us about worship & what pleases Him

6. This will free us from the world's idolatries

- instead of trusting the government, you'll trust the Lord over all governors and presidents
- instead of trusting your bank account and retirement fund, you'll trust the One who provides all things
- instead of trying to create worship in our image, we'll simply long to look to God in His Word

So, now we begin to understand that we are to be...

II. WORSHIPING GOD AS HE IS

- the cure to idolatry is seeing God as He is
- the cure to immorality is seeing God as He is
- the remedy to a godless worldview is seeing God for who He is
- Scripture shows us God as He is, and Revelation 4 does that in a spectacular manner
- Revelation 4 & 5 now gives us keen insight into how to worship God as He is

1 He is holy, holy, holy

- let's just focus in on this key attribute as it is presented here by John
- four living creatures say, *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*
- take the radiant beauty we've seen already, add this to it & it is truly amazing
- God is wholly other, transcendent, high and above all His creation
- *"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,"*

(Isaiah 46:9–10 ESV)

- God created all things; He rules over all things; He sustains all things

- He is altogether separated from the world that He has made
- He is uncontaminated from sin and failure
- His holiness means He is perfectly beautiful & worthy of our praise
- we'll look at this more over the next few Sundays, but I must press on for now

2. He is our Redeemer

- in Rev 5, we see the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David coming forth
- we saw two weeks ago, however, this majestic figure is like a lamb slain
- *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*
(Revelation 5:9–10 ESV)
- Jesus is worshiped because He alone accomplished creation's redemption
- there is no question about it, no doubt; He did it
- Jesus Christ overcame sin, death, hell and the devil.
- He paid the ransom with His own blood
- those He ransomed are and will be a kingdom and priests unto God the Father
- all this makes Jesus worthy

3. Ascribing Worth

- worship comes from an old word that would literally be pronounced "worth-ship"
- giving worth, or better, ascribing worth to one who is worthy: that's worship
- in 4.11, we hear four living creatures & twenty-four elders ascribing worth to God
- *"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."*
- then, in Rev 5.8, we see & hear these same beings ascribing worth to Jesus Christ in v. 9
- *"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*
- add to this group 100s of 1000s of angelic creatures in v. 12
- *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"*

4. What makes a person worthy?

- or let me ask it in a negative: what makes a person *unworthy*?
- let me ask a question yet again to answer this one: what is the greatest commandment?
- to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength and your neighbor as yourself
- so, not loving God in this way and not loving your neighbor in this way disqualifies you
- you cannot be worthy of all worship, glory, and praise
- but Jesus loved the Father with all He was and had
- He resisted Satan's temptations; He performed God's will perfectly
- Jesus loved His neighbor, also perfectly, by laying down His life for theirs & ransoming them

5. Christ alone is worthy

- He is trustworthy
- He never abuses His authority like so many in high positions of government
- He does not waste resources or spend foolishly only upon Himself
- He doesn't use His Godhood to manipulate others
- we can never regret giving Him glory and honor and blessing

- you can trust Jesus; you need to trust Jesus

Conclusion – We don't worship God the way that we should

- too often, we follow after idols of our own creating
- we don't love God with every ounce and fibre of our being
- we all too often fail to love our neighbor as we love ourselves
- we need to see God as He is and Jesus as He is
- we need to be ransomed by Jesus

The way to be ransomed by Him is to repent of your sin

- in other words, you turn away from you
- you turn away from the things that you trust instead of trusting God
- you turn from the idols of this world
- like Moses, you turn from that which is visible to go hard after Him who is invisible
- you turn from your sin and you trust Jesus' death & resurrection to ransom you completely

Seeing God will change your life...it did John's I have no doubt

- when you see God, like John did in Rev 4 & 5, you know He is worthy of all praise
- and if you see Him, and His Son, Jesus, as worthy, you will worship rightly
- praise be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
- Amen