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## JESUS' THRONE

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### Part 4 of Revelation

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Revelation 4 | October 12, 2003

Good evening, welcome to Mars Hill. My name is Mark, I'm one of the pastors here at the church. Good to see you. We're in Revelation 4 tonight. So if you've got a Bible you can go there.

This chapter tonight is really good. I'm not saying the other chapters in the Bible like stink or anything, but this one in particular has a lot of great content. So if I Charlie Brown it, it's my fault tonight, because I've got great material to work with. We're in the book of Revelation, we're looking at the doctrine of worship and what does that mean for us as a people. I'll pray and we'll get busy in chapter 4.

Father God, thank you for this great place to meet in, this great home that you've provided. Thank you for musicians and song writers and thank you for sound engineers and visual artists and all the people that have come together – ushering, greeting, serving, setting up, tearing down – doing all these things so that we would have a wonderful place to be with you. God, as we come to study the doctrine of worship tonight, we pray that you would give us ears to hear what the spirit has to say to us as a church, and we ask Holy Spirit that you would come and illuminate our understanding of the Scriptures, because you inspired the writing of these same words, and you are the one that knows completely and truthfully what exactly they mean and how they are to apply to our lives.

It's our prayer that we would see you, Lord Jesus, seated upon your Throne; that we would come to you by grace, that we would adore you and worship you, and that we would be transformed and get a taste of the experience that John had and long for the day when we have it in completeness ourselves. We love you Lord God, and we thank you in advance for a time in this great text. Amen.

As we get into Revelation 4, I want to preface my sermon tonight by telling you that you really need your imagination. If you don't have an imagination, Revelation in particular, the Bible in general, will be very cumbersome, very hard for you. G.K. Chesterton, a great author and Christian writer in his own right, he said that there are really two kinds of people; people who seek to get Heaven into their head and their head explodes because it can't contain the fullness of Heaven, and other people who seek to get their head into Heaven. As we come into Revelation, lots of people try and get Heaven into their head – charts and graphs and details and trying to work out all the minutia and the trivia of this great book. Don't do that.

Use the book instead as an opportunity to get your head into Heaven – like a poet, to look around and see. And you're gonna need your imagination because throughout the book, what we are getting is the account from John, who is in exile on Sunday – the Lord's Day – off on the island of Patmos, couldn't be with his church. Jesus shows up and unveils or reveals to him himself – this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, chapter 1:1 says, and the revelation of human history, the unveiling of what is to come. John then is basically at the end of the tether of human language trying to explain to us what he saw and what he experienced.

You and I have the same experience. When we have gone through something that is amazing or overwhelming for us, we're straining for words to try and communicate that. It doesn't mean we can't explain it, but it means that unless the person we're communicating to themselves have been through it, it's hard for them to relate. John went into Heaven. How do you explain that? He continually tips us off to use our imagination with the word "like." He says it was like this, it was like this and it was like this. Because it's hard to explain Heaven, God in his fullness, on his Throne, in his Glory. That's why even in our language we use like, simile, metaphor to try and describe that which we're straining to articulate.

My wife, in about a week, is gonna give birth to our fourth child – yeah, you can pray for her. Not only does she have to put up with me, she's got four kids. But you know, you talk to a woman – I remember doing this, when I was newly married asking a woman, saying, "So what's it like to have a baby?" Only a guy would ask that question, because there's no way to articulate that. Well, it's like hitting yourself in the head with a hammer times infinity and then getting hit by a car. There's really no way – it's like this, it's like that. That's why Bill Cosby said, "It's like taking your bottom lip and pulling it up over your head." He said it's like that.

But only a woman that's been through childbirth, explaining her birth to another woman do they really understand what they're going through. John goes into Heaven – he has an experience that none of us have had. Because of that, he's straining to articulate to us, you've gotta use your imagination, you've gotta see it, you've gotta go there, you gotta be there to really capture the fullness of what's going on. So tonight in particular, use your imagination. And as you do, there's one central prop in the book of Revelation that, if you will – if Revelation is a stage and it's the unfolding of human history, the central prop with the light on it is the Throne – and that's what we're gonna encounter tonight.

You're gonna need to use your imagination to see this Throne, and all the symbolism and metaphor and simile happens around the Throne. So here we go. We started chapter 4:1. After this, John says, speaking to the churches in 2 and 3, "I looked and there before me was a door standing open in

Heaven.” Great. It’s not quite the Led Zeppelin song, but it’s close. There’s a doorway to Heaven is what there is. John looks up, there’s a door. It’s almost like The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, where you open the door and in you go to this completely other world. Here John sees the door in Heaven and he’s gonna pass through this door.

“And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet,” you’re gonna hear this word ‘like’ a lot, “said come up here and I will show you what must take place after this.” I want to stress that word “must.” John is spoken to and the future, he is told, is already settled in the mind of God. There are some theologies both inside of and outside of the Christian religion that will teach you that God doesn’t know tomorrow, that God’s not in control of the future, that God doesn’t decree what will happen tomorrow, that somehow God is like us, trapped in history working it out with us. It’s not that way in your Bible.

Here we are told that these are the things that must take place. What you’re going to see is that God must be worshipped. What you see is that God’s enemies must be defeated. What you see is that God’s people must be blessed. And you’re going to see that these things must happen. They will happen and they are as good as God because they come from him and they are of his promise. And so these are things that must happen, and the doctrine that we’re dealing with through the book of Revelation, and worship too must happen – it has to happen. It’s something that God has so decreed that it cannot be otherwise.

He goes on and he says, “At once I was in the Spirit.” Some of you are charismatics and Pentecostals, and people like to argue about what it means to be in the Spirit. John doesn’t explain this to us; it’s not something for us to argue over. Again, it’s an experience whereby you know that God is present with you, that he is in you and through you and for you, that he is leading, guiding, instructing, empowering. That he, in a very real way, is there with you. That’s what it means to be in the Spirit. And John isn’t assuming that people who don’t know God would understand what he’s talking about. But if you’re a Christian and you’re here tonight, John is assuming that you know what that means because there have been occasions in your life with God where God has encountered you in such a pronounced and such a profound way that the only way to describe it is that you were in the Spirit and it was a sacred moment for you with God.

And he said that, “He had this moment and there before him was a Throne in Heaven with someone sitting on it.” And now the Throne becomes for us the central prop that ties together the whole of the book of Revelation. The subject, the hero of the book is Jesus; it’s the Revelation of Jesus Christ. And the central prop is this Throne, and seated on it is Jesus. What you’ll see from this point forward is that the throne dominates in Revelation – of the 22 chapters, the Throne appears in 17 of them. The Throne is actually – a Throne is mentioned throughout the Bible, Old and New Testament.

Often times it’s spoken of human rulers or Satan and demons who rule in a spiritual way. The preponderance of the times, 60% of the time, the Throne refers to God’s throne in a very positive way. It appears 135 times in the Old Testament, 61 times in the New Testament. Of the 61 occasions that it appears in the New Testament, 45 were in Revelation. A full quarter of the appearances of the Bible, a full two-thirds of the appearances in the New Testament are sitting in the book of Revelation speaking of this Throne. And it is very important for us to have this Throne as the center and for it to be for us the focus in Revelation.

Everything happens around the Throne, comes from the Throne or goes to the Throne. If you lose sight of the Throne and that Jesus is the one sitting on the Throne, Revelation becomes completely tattered for you and you start to lose perspective on it. And here we see the throne, and there is Jesus Christ sitting upon his Throne. And I’ll say this – that the Throne is such a powerful image. How many of you have a dad who has a Throne? See, we still have Thrones, don’t we? I’m a dad, I have a Throne; it’s a BarcaLounger. It’s wood sides and leather middle, and it’s mine. It’s a sacred place; it’s higher than the other seats in the house. That’s my high and exalted lofty place of respect and honor. And I sit there and make sovereign decrees from the Throne, like change the TV channel and get me something to drink.

And Thrones are majestic and they’re sacred and they’re holy and they belong to the owner. That’s why when I’m gone my boys like to climb up on my Throne and kick it back and they like to pretend like they’re King of Kings and Lord of Lords, which they’re not. They’re pretenders to the Throne; they’re really not possessors of the Throne. They’re sitting in my Throne. And when I come home then, my daughter or one of the boys will say, “Hey, hey, daddy’s home, get off his chair!” Because they know they’re not fit for that kind of jurisdiction.

That’s why even in your house, if you grew up with any deference or a decent dad, he had his chair. And at the table he had his chair. If you sat on it – huh-oh, bad things happened, terrible things happened. Because that’s a sacred place, that belongs to dad. That’s why even in some Jewish homes, dad’s chair at the dinner table is just a little bit higher than everybody else’s. Is that pride? No. That’s deference and honor and respect. It’s a little Throne everybody else should respect.

In that day, you’re looking at a culture too where people didn’t sit frequently. They squatted a lot or they sat on the floor or they reclined. How many of you have been to an eastern country where people squat? It’s really weird. I remember the first time I went to India, everybody was squatting. We don’t do that, do we? We’re not squatters. My shoes, I don’t untie or tie them – I keep them tied, I keep them loose, and I jam my foot in and I pull my foot out. Because I don’t even like to squat down to tie my shoes. Some of you go Velcro or slip-ons or flip flops because you won’t squat once in your whole life – never. You won’t. We’re not a nation of squatters.

In a culture though, where people would squat, sit on the floor and recline, chairs were uncommon, particularly Thrones. They were reserved for very special people. There were four people in particular that would get a Throne: a King who ruled over a Kingdom; a judge who was rendering a verdict about guilt or innocence in regard to sin; a warrior who had conquered an enemy or a foe in his victory would sit upon his Throne; and also a Priest, who would mediate between people and God and by being lifted up was showing that they were bringing God to people and that they were bringing people to God.

When you see Jesus seated on his Throne, that's what he is here; he's a King who's ruling over all of creation, which is his Kingdom. He is a judge who renders us all as sinful and guilty, he's also a Priest who gets off of his Throne and dies for our sin to forgive us and mediates between us and the Father. And he's a great warrior through whose death on the cross, Satan, sin and death have been conquered and we have victory. And when you see the Throne, it explodes repeatedly to the drumbeat that holds the rhythm through the book of Revelation. And here it show up, and seated on it is Jesus.

Here is what surrounds the Throne. That's the object- the Throne – the ruler is Jesus. Around the Throne are all the bit players in the book of Revelation. We'll meet some of them in verse 3. "And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne." Jesus told us in John 8:12 that "He is the light of the world." We see in the book of Revelation later on that there will be no sun in the New Heaven, the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, that there will be no darkness and there will be no night because the presence of Jesus in unveiled glory illuminates the totality of the New Creation and it's continually light because Jesus is present.

What we see here as well is that surrounding the Throne are these stones, these translucent stones, that when the light hits them they reflect and magnify color. This is – maybe for us, it would be like the illumination of stained glass. Light comes through and prism of color explodes into just beautiful glorious picture. All around Jesus is color and encircling over Jesus is a rainbow that's reminiscent of the days of Noah. How many of you love color? It matters to you? You have a mirror and every morning you're trying to figure out – does this go with this, do these shoes match this purse, does this all work? My daughter and my wife continually walk in and they ask questions like, "Does this look good? Does this match?"

I don't know why – I actually know what does. It kind of scares me a little bit, really, to be honest with you. But yeah, I go, that matches, that doesn't match, that matches, that doesn't match. How many of you, you're like this with your interior décor? You have to paint your walls – things have to match. Why? How many of you paint the walls in your home because you can't stand white because you're a Christian? Right? Because in the presence of God will be color exploding – majestic, unbelievable, brilliant color and lighting. How many of you have these colors on your walls in your home – yellow, red or orange? You all have them – guilty. Why? Because we live in the Northwest and we never get to see the sunset so we fake it. We paint it on the wall.

Seriously, that's what we do. It's denial, it's color denial. That's what we do. "Oh look, it's sunny out." No it's not, actually. You just painted the wall yellow. Why is it that even color evokes certain emotions in human beings. Because God is beautiful, God is Creator, God is Creative. God made color, God made our eyes to perceive and appreciate color, and color matters to us. That's why my daughter's room is lavender and mine isn't, right? That's why when you come into this building there's color. We don't have white walls because we worship God, not an orthodontist. We're saying something about God, that color matters to God, it really truly does. When you go to Heaven, God won't be sitting in some used Adirondack chair surrounded with velvet paintings of Dale Jarrett and Elvis and dogs playing pool; it'll be beautiful and glorious and good and the colors will be magnificent.

That's why we love color. It's amazing to me. Some of you really care about the color of your car, for example; it's very important to you. Why? Why do you care about the color of your clothes and the color of your hair, ladies? Why do you care about the color of your eyes, why do you care about the color of your house and your furnishings? Why do you care about the color of your car? Because you're an image bearer of God, you're made in the image and likeness of God – he's Creator, he's Creative – he made color and he made your eyes so that you can appreciate color. He also made lighting. That's why we love lighting and we love shape and we love design and we love symmetry because God is beautiful.

It was interesting, years ago I remember when we started the church I chose as one of our four core values beauty. As I read a stack of about two dozen systematic theologies, no where did it list beauty as an attribute of God. But God is beautiful; God is an artist. If you appreciate the changing of color in the fall it's because you're an image-bearer of God. If you paint the walls in your home, if you select your outfit, if you choose a certain color of car, if you dye your hair, it's because you're an image-bearer of God. And also maybe a little insecure. But, but you're an image-bearer of God.

And it's weird, because the world is filled with color and people who love color and they have no idea why. They have no idea why. Because when we get to Heaven and we are in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ seated on his Throne, there will be color and lighting. That's why color and lighting matters. How many of you – lighting is a big deal? It should be. You're Christians. Lighting matters. Fluorescent lighting? None of that in Heaven; that's in hell. That's all they get. White walls, florescent lighting, probably something that resembles a cubicle. That's hell. We're image-bearers of God. We're created for much much more.

That's what surrounds the Throne. Color, visual imagery, lighting, beauty. Verse 4 – "Surrounding the Throne," – Here are some other things around Jesus' Throne. – "Were 24 other Thrones," little Thrones like the kid's table at Thanksgiving, "And seated on them were 24 elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads." Pay attention to that crown, it will be important in a minute. There's Jesus' Throne and then there's little Thrones – 24. My sons have little Thrones. We pull them out sometimes and they sit in them next to my BarcaLounger. I'm in the big Throne; they're in the little Thrones; King and the princes. Nice. If you have a kid, you should get him a chair.

There's a big debate historically. Who's sitting on these thrones? Who are these 24 guys? It doesn't tell us, so we shouldn't fight over that. I will give you a suggestion. I think it's the 12 Disciples and the 12 Tribes of Israel. That's what I think. In Matthew's Gospel, I think it's around Chapter 19:28 if memory serves me correct, Peter comes to Jesus and he said, "We've given up everything. What's going to happen to us?" And Jesus said, "I promise you this – when you get to my Kingdom, you, my Disciples, will sit on 12 Thrones." There was a promise given to the Disciples that they would sit on 12 Thrones. So I think 12 are the leaders of the New Testament's seats, the 12 Apostles, and I believe the other 12 are the heads of each of the 12 Tribes of Israel. The Old and the New Testament people of God, their leaders.

And this is important because what we see here is that in the Bible, a leader, an elder – the elders are the leaders in both the Old and New Testament. A leader is someone who is under Jesus. They may get respect and prominence and authority, they may get a position of stature and respect, but really

they see themselves as being under Jesus. His Throne is bigger and higher and they're sitting under him, basically executing what it is that he has decreed for them to do. That's a leader. That's the same thing that Peter says in 1 Peter 5, where Jesus is chief shepherd, also known as senior pastor. And that all other servants of God are to be called under-shepherds, they serve under his jurisdiction and rule. It goes on.

Here's what comes from the Throne. Jesus is on the Throne, this is what's around the Throne, here's what comes from the Throne. Verse 5, "From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peels of thunder." That's reminiscent of Moses' experience on Mt. Sinai when he came before God and received the Ten Commandments. "Before the throne, seven lamps," like the Menorah and the Temple, "were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God." Some translations will say, "The seven-fold and a perfect Holy Spirit of God." "Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal." Again, you've gotta use your imagination, you've gotta see this.

Throne, translucent stones, Jesus' glory blazing forth, color exploding, light exploding; short Thrones with John and the other Apostles, each of the 12 Tribes of Israel sitting underneath Jesus' jurisdiction, leading and loving and caring for his people. And in front of the Throne is a sea of glass that looks like crystal. How many of you love water? How many of you find it to be a very sacred thing to get some time in God's creation and to be in water? How many of you actually moved to this city from somewhere else in the country because you loved the water? Some of you, yeah. It tells us elsewhere in Revelation that what comes out of the Throne is a river; it explodes from underneath the Throne of Jesus – water. How many of you, you take a walk by the sea, it's a good place for you to pray? Near a river? If there's water, running water, fresh clean water it causes you to thank God for being the Creator and the maker of all that is good and to enjoy his presence there. It's true.

We love creation. We worship the Creator. We don't worship water, but sometimes it's nice to worship by the water. And in front of Jesus' Throne you can just get this – what happens when there's water, especially when it's so calm that it's just like a sea of crystal? It's quiet. And what does water do? It amplifies sound. The acoustics of Heaven – we'll get to this in a minute – will be unprecedented. You'll see later in the book that even the city itself is set up as a square. The way that the entire acoustic creation of Heaven is made for music and sound, to the degree that amplification happens across the sea; it is like glass that has enthroned the Throne. Unbelievable beauty and brilliance.

Ours is a God who cares about esthetics, he cares about décor, he cares about design, he cares about acoustics. He cares about music and sound and sight and hue. He cares about light and he cares about shadow. He truly does. That's why you and I appreciate those things, because we're image-bearers of God and God has made us to appreciate such things. He goes on to tell us what else is before the Throne. "In the center, around the throne," at the end of verse 6, "were four living creatures." This is an echo reminiscent of what Ezekiel 1 tells us that Ezekiel saw when he gazed into Heaven. "They were covered with eyes in front and back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was flying like an eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying."

The big debate here – well what are these creatures. He keeps saying "Well it's like this, like this, like this, like this. It's like an ox with six wings that flies and sings beautifully and has a bunch of eyeballs." If you don't have an imagination, that's not gonna illuminate you; that's gonna sicken you. That's a flying Whitney Houston cow. That's different. It's a beautiful voice, a tremendous physique, an all-seeing, all-knowing series of eyes and wings that fly. To me, I believe it's probably an angel – that's my guess. In Isaiah 6 where Isaiah sees Jesus Christ seated on the Throne. John 12:41 tells us that when Isaiah looked into Heaven he saw Jesus seated on the Throne – the same thing we see here.

"And surrounding him were angels who were crying out Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty," the same song that is being sung here. But they had six wings and they had eyes that surrounded and comforted them. It's probably angels. What you see around the Throne – human beings, angels, animals – all things that are made being drawn together around Jesus for the purpose of worship. That's where the Psalmist tells us, "That everything that has breath should praise the Lord." The beautiful thing too, is that you see the Throne of Jesus Christ as the center of human history and the Throne of Jesus Christ as the center of Revelation; it should also be the center of our lives, individually and corporately as a people.

And I know as we grow, some of you have expressed a concern for us as a church – how will we be close and have community and know each other and love each other and be unified. There are so many of us. Last we had over 1600 people in worship on Sunday. That's great. But here's the key; the Throne is the key. If Jesus Christ is on his Throne, which he is, and you are pulling close to him and everyone else is pulling close to him and I am pulling close to him, invariably what happens is that we are close to one another. It is through worship that God makes us into a unified people. That's where, even if you're here tonight and let's say, for example, that you are married and you have strife in your marriage, first things first. Rather than working on your communication theory or your theology of marriage, the two of you need to be actively pursuing Jesus Christ as the center.

And if you do, you will be closer. What holds us together as a people, what brings us together as a people, what makes us a people is Jesus as center. And wherever we come from, we are pulling together to be with him. That's where unity comes from and that's what Jesus indicated when he said, "If I be lifted up, I'll draw everyone unto myself." He's on this Throne lifted up, we are being drawn to him. As we do, we are closer to one another as we pursue him.

How many of you truly, this is a fact, you feel closest to those people who are actively pursuing God. You may not know them very well, but you meet them, they love Jesus, you love Jesus, they're pressing into him, you're pressing into him. And all of a sudden you realize, "I really enjoy this person, and they're a friend and I feel close to them." That's why. Because when Jesus is the center and you are made to worship, you find yourself being pulled into the chorus of worshippers, into this great choir of history that God is making. And you enjoy those that are on that journey with you.

And here it includes the angels. And I'll tell you this. When we sing it's a very sacred matter. A very sacred matter. Because the angels sing; they were made for that purpose. We sing; we were made for that purpose. How many of you are basically addicted to music? You listen all day, all night. Radio in your car, MP3 player, speakers on your computer. You listen to music all the time. Why? I'll tell you why. It's because God has made us for song.

It's amazing to me – we live in culture that is filled with interior design, lighting specialists, color specialists, clothing design, personal fashion – all of these things. We're in a culture that has multiple concerts, that has lots of bands, has multiple music stations.

We can't get enough bandwidth to keep up with the styles and the genres, so we're having to go to digital radio. No one ever asks, "How come we like music? Why?" It's because we're image-bearers of God. We see the first recordings of a song in the book of Genesis. God creates our first parents, Adam and Eve. The first recorded words we have of any man, from our father Adam in the book of Genesis, God brings to him his lovely wife Eve and he sings to her. In the Hebrew it's a beautiful song; the English is "She's bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman because she was taken from man." I wish I was brushed up on my Hebrew; I would give it to you in Hebrew. It's beautiful. He sings to her.

We don't have any recorded words of a human being speaking as I am now, until after sin enters the world. Some have postulated – one is a gentleman named Gordon McDonald – that perhaps singing is the language of Heaven and speaking is what fallen people do, perhaps. It also tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is God-breathed, it's inspired of God. How much of Scripture of song and poetry? At least 25%. At least. God inspires poetry. How many of you are song writers? Musicians? Poets? Writers? Your inspiration comes from God. What continually happens in Revelation is this unfolding cycle whereby Jesus is revealed or unveiled. They see him and then they sing and then he reveals himself again and then they sing. It's the habitual pattern of rhythm throughout the book of Revelation.

We don't sing in a vacuum, we don't create in a vacuum. Art doesn't come out of nothing. It comes out of inspiration. Inspiration comes out of knowing God and seeing God for who he is. And as we see what happens in the book of Revelation, there's at least 11 new songs that are sung. I know some of you come to the church, and we've got a whole theology of song-writing that will come up in the book. But some of you tell me, "I don't know the songs." But it's important for us to sing new songs and it's important for us to have song writers who articulate for us who we are as a people and how we have seen God. That's exactly what happens with the angels.

I'll tell you my favorite theology song from the Bible. It's a little minor Prophet named Zephaniah. In Chapter 3:17, I've told you this before, there's a great verse there. It says that in that day when we have the same experience of John and we see Jesus Christ face-to-face in unveiled Glory on his Throne, in that day that God himself will delight over us and that he will rejoice over you and me with what? Singing. God not only makes us to sing and inspires us to be song writers and musicians and poets. God himself is not just Creator, God himself is creative. And God is a musician and God is an artist and we will hear the voice of God singing over us.

Some of you have this terrible picture of Heaven that we'll all be chubby cherubs up on clouds, bored, playing harps and really bad commercial jingle tunes. What is that all about? That's not what it is. You'll hear God sing. Can you imagine what it will be like to have a redeemed body that is perfected with perfect hearing, perfect acoustics and God singing over you? Unbelievable, unfathomable truly. I have three kids, fourth on the way. I'm their father. My children love for me to sing over them because they're image-bearers of God. My youngest son sometimes has a hard time sleeping, so I will hold him and I will sing for him. And as I embrace him and I delight in him and I sing over him, it brings him security and rest.

Just like the Psalmist says, "Quietness and rest to your salvation." That's what Heaven will be like for us. That God is a Father who will embrace us as his children, but he will delight in us and he will sing over us. Some of the songs we will sing in Heaven will be songs that we know. Some of them will be songs of Scripture. Some people say, "Well aren't we gonna get bored singing the same songs?" How many of you have a few favorite songs that you sing all the time? You have that album that you listen to all the time, to the place where anyone that knows you is sick of it and won't let you play it when they're in the car with you.

You air guitar in the shower and you belt it out and you're like Bruce Springsteen, with seven people on one mic, just veins exploding out of your head, screaming at the top of your lungs. Some of you have the Bon Jovi album – you know exactly what I'm talking about. You would never do that in public, but in private you've got your album, you've got your rock star look. I've got a four year old son, he's mastered the rock star look. He's just really good at it. Why do we do that? Because we love song, and there are certain favorites that we'll sing forever that we'll never get tired of. And then there will be other songs that song writers are writing as Jesus is unveiled, more revealing. Because Jesus is an unending God – there's no end to God.

So as Jesus continually reveals himself, there's something new and amazing continually to be inspired by to write music from. Any of you that have been married, you've gotten a glimpse of this. It doesn't matter how long you're married to someone, you're always learning new things about them. There's continual unveiling. "Oh, I didn't know that. Now I understand you more fully and I love you more deeply." That's how it will be in the Kingdom when we are with Jesus and see him face-to-face. There will be singing, there will be song, there will be music, there will be instrumentation. We'll get into all of this in the book.

But here's the song that the angels sing. "Day and night they never stop saying," verse 8, "Holy, holy, holy." The first thing – the Holiness of God. Worship is always tied to the revelation of God. Who's God? God is Holy. What does that mean? He's different, he's other, he's unlike us. He is Creator, we are creation; we are impatient, he is patient; we're short-sighted, he is enduring. We are sometimes hostile and he's gracious. God's just really different than we are. That's what it means. And they sing about the Holiness of God. That's what the angels sing about. The most frequently referred to attribute of God in the whole Bible is the Holiness of God.

When you come to worship, it will be paramount for you to think about Jesus Christ on this Throne in Glory, and to understand an attribute of him so that your devotion can be in response to who he is. For so many of us, worship is difficult because we have a diminished and reduced view of Jesus. And for some it may even be accurate, but insufficient and incomplete. What I mean is this. Jesus Christ has existed as the eternal God forever, seated on the Throne in Heaven, surrounded by angels, adored and worshipped, crying day and night, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come." "For a season he humbled himself," Philippians 2 says. He came off his Throne. He was born in humble circumstances to a

teenage virgin in a dumpy rural town in a barn. Not what you would expect from God.

But he was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Isaiah says that there was no beauty or majesty that would attract us to him. He looked very normal, he seemed very simple. He was murdered, betrayed by a friend with a kiss. Humble, simple, Galilean peasant; itinerant Rabbi, teacher. Three days later he rose, as he promised he would. And then he ascended back into Heaven. And Jesus' position today is not in humility, but in Glory; and not in humiliation but in exaltation. And if the only way that you see Jesus is as the humble, defeated Galilean peasant who suffered greatly, you will have a hard time wondering how you were to be inspired to sing about this holy and great God.

So we have to see Jesus in his present state; high and exalted, on a Throne in Heaven as a King and as a Priest and as a warrior and as a judge. And to see him in that place, that will give you the inspiration to respond. They cry out, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty," a phrase that is repeated some eight or nine times in this book. Lord – it's rulership; God – divinity; Almighty – all power and authority belongs to this God who was, always has been, who is, is at work today and who is to come. He's coming back – Revelation 1:7-8 says that he's coming back for you and me as his people. He is coming. Why do they sing? They sing because they see Jesus as the only God.

Now here's what happens. Here's the Throne; Jesus is on the Throne. Around the Throne, angels, color, lighting, a rainbow, other Thrones, 24 elders, angels singing. Can you imagine what it's gonna be like to hear the harmony of angels? How many of you love harmonies? How many of you love acoustics? What will that day be like, when you see and hear the angels sing of the attributes of God? And the whole while you're watching Jesus Christ receive his glory. There has to be a response.

What we see now is that not only are there things happening around the Throne and things coming from the Throne, that there is also a response that goes to the Throne. This is where you and I come in. Verse 9, "Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on this Throne, who lives forever and ever," there's no end to Jesus, "The 24 elders fall down before him who sits on the Throne and worship him forever and ever and they lay their crowns before the Throne." This is what the elders do; they see Jesus in his glorious state. They come down off of their Throne, they lie prostrate on the ground as John did in Revelation 1. And they worship Jesus.

How many of you aspire to be a leader in a ministry some day? Here's your key text. As a leader, you will get prominence, you will get respect, you'll get a little Throne, you'll get a little crown, you'll get a little title, you'll get a little power, you'll get a little fame, you'll get a little recognition, you'll get a little credit. The most important thing is for you to get off your little Throne and for you to get down on your little face and make sure that everything sits at the feet of Jesus. That's what a leader is, that's what a leader does. Mars Hill is doing very well because Jesus has had his way. I have the privilege every week of sitting up here in an exalted place, a little bit higher than you with a little bit of authority and respect. The most important thing for me to do? Lay it down at the feet of Jesus.

"Every good and perfect gift," James says, "Comes from above." Your life is from Jesus; your health is from Jesus, your skills, talents, abilities, IQ, friends, opportunities, employments, joys, pleasures and treasures. It's all from him. And an inability for us to recognize that causes us to be puffed up and proud, to seek to get this glory for ourselves, for what we are and what we have and what we've done. The elders get down off their Thrones face first. Humility, surrender; from dust they have come, to dust they have gone. He is Creator, they are creation. Humility. Humility is important for a worshipper. To sing about God, not about themselves; to sing about his victories, not their own. Paul, in Jeremiah says repeated, "But he who boasts boasts in him" Boast in the Lord.

It says in Hebrews 13 that leaders are those people that we can imitate their way of faith and the outcome of their way of life. That's why these guys get little Thrones because they're not gonna turn into little despots and kings who build fiefdoms to their own glory. They're gonna get off their Throne and they're gonna worship Jesus and they're gonna encourage others to follow in their example. And worship is something – here we see, you'll see it throughout the book of Revelation, something that we do with our physical body. Some of you come from Bible-teaching churches and traditions where worship is an intellectual agreement; it's not a bodily response. It's not a whole body response. Jesus tells us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. You have to love God with all your mind; you need to have sound theology. You need to know that Jesus Christ is the one and only God, that he is high and exalted on a Throne, that he is Holy. He was and is and is to come.

You need to have a theology of humility that enables you to bend your knee and to get down on your face prostrate before him. You need to have good doctrine. But you've gotta love him with all your soul and all your heart and all your strength. And that comes out in your body. That's where your theology turns into doxology turns into biography – it goes from what you believe to how you worship, to what you do with your hands. And for worship to truly occur, it has to express itself bodily. That's why through the Bible we see people raising their hands, we see people clapping. We see people kneeling, we see people dancing, we see people shouting. We see people laying prostrate. We see people raising their hands in receptivity that God would give them grace and then surrender.

Some of you come from places and traditions where you're not allowed to do that. I remember getting in an argument with a Christian pastor. I said, "You know, you guys take the Bible very literally, but your worship is just so dull, it's so stale, it's so sterile, it's so passionless." I said, "What about that stuff – all those verses? You believe the Bible about clapping and singing and rejoicing and raising your hands." He said, "Well, we do that in our heart." I tell you what; I've been married to my lovely wife for 11 years. When I come home, right – the revelation of Mark Driscoll – I walk in the door, "Tah-dah, here I am; Baby, I'm home! Did you miss me?" What I don't want is this. I'm looking for more than a nod of the head and a mental agreement.

I'm looking for hugs and kisses and smiles and maybe a little more. I'm looking for response. That's what I'm looking for. You and I are the Bride of Christ. Jesus Christ is our great groom. When we pass through that door, ushered into his presence, see him unveiled, he is hoping for more than – that.

He is hoping for a full-body response, a passionate people who pursue him with joy and zeal. That's what Paul means in part when he says that, "We should offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, that that's our spiritual act of worship." When you're here, if you want to raise your hands, you want to kneel, you want to clap, you want to shout, you want to lay prostrate; if it's for Jesus and he's on the Throne, then God bless you. Move a chair if you need some space – I don't care.

It's just between you and your Maker, and if you can't express yourself bodily it means either that you haven't seen Jesus for who he truly is and you don't understand what he's truly done, or something in you is more worried about how you appear to others than how you're perceived by him. Okay? So here they get into this reason why we worship. Some of you are thinking, "Why do we worship Jesus? Why?" He tells us right here. Here's their song. "You are worthy." The second song in the book. It just starts this way, "You are worthy." That's it.

You and I are going to worship; we are all made for worship. God has created us for worship. We can't help but give our time and our energy and our talents and our passions and our zeal and our body to something or somebody – we can't help it. My question to you is this. Is what you're worshipping worthy? God alone is worthy. We get worship from an old English word, "Worship." It means worth-ship. You give yourself to that which is worthy. Is what your object of worship is, is it worth it? If you're a pervert, you're worshipping sex. Is it worth it? If you're greedy, you worship money. Is it worth it? If you're a glutton you worship food. Is it worth it? It's not worth it.

In Romans 1:25 Paul cuts human history into two categories; those who worship the Creator and those who worship creation. That's it. Creator is God. Creation is stuff and people and angels and anything else that is made. Anything that God has made or we have made. The Bible commands us to worship God alone because he is worthy, and then it invites us to enjoy creation. Enjoy your food, enjoy your job, enjoy your lawn, enjoy your seasons. Go for a swim, take a bath, kiss your wife, wrestle with your kids. But worship God. Enjoy creation, worship Creator. It's what he tells us here, "You alone – you are worthy," he says, "Our Lord and God." It's intensely personal. Worship is an intensely personal thing. This is about our God and Maker.

Paul tells us in Romans 1:6 that you are called to belong to Jesus Christ. This is the language of belonging. If you belong to Jesus, that is your God and Maker; that is our God and Maker. That we belong to Jesus and Jesus belongs to us. It's the language of intimacy and love and relationship and passion and inspiration. And we sing and he will sing over us and he reveals himself and we delight him. And that God is ours and that we are God's. That's what Paul says when he says that, "Our life is hidden in Christ." This is what he's getting at. That this is the God who is worthy – our Lord, our God, to receive from us. And I want you to get this. The Throne has Jesus on it; it is surrounded by all of these bit players and characters. From the Throne comes the revelation and the unveiling of God.

What goes to the Throne? Worship. We get to send our worship to that Throne. It tells us elsewhere in the book that when we pray, our prayers rise up to God as incense, smelling sweet to him. When you pray, it goes to the Throne; when you sing it goes to the Throne. It may look like you're singing to the ceiling, you're singing to the band. You're not. You're singing to Jesus Christ who alone is worthy. And your voice is going to his Throne. It is a spiritual, supernatural, miraculous thing. But when we sing, we sing to Jesus. Jesus is on his Throne. It tells us in Revelation 1:17-18 that he's here in this church.

It tells us here in Revelation 4 that he is there on his Throne, he is both – that he is here with us to reveal himself and inspire us by knowing who he is and seeing him and being pulled through a similar experience like John. We too are in the spirit and we see Jesus and we respond to him. And as we sing and celebrate as a people that goes to the Throne that he's seated on in Heaven. It's an amazing and overwhelming truth. We sing all the time, but this is different.

What should he receive? Glory. Weightiness, priority, importance, honor, deference, respect, obedience, holiness, submission and power. All of our authority, all of our accomplishment, all of our jurisdiction. Why? "For you created all things." God is Maker, we are made. That God has made us and he has made us for a purpose – that is to worship. You created all things by your will, they were created and they have their being. You need to know this. You were made by Jesus Christ and you were made for a purpose. And that purpose is to worship.

He alone is worthy, so don't waste all that he has made on adoring yourself, your addictions, your sins and false gods. Take your song, send it to the Throne; adore Jesus, who sits on it. And I'll tell you the beauty of all this. Some people remain unconvinced. Why? Why? See, we're so intensely selfish when it comes to worship that we continually ask what's in it for me? Well God gets his glory and he's worthy. That's why we worship God. In addition though, because God is so gracious and kind, as we worship him and he gets his glory we get something. Joy. Joy.

As God gets glory, we get joy. And God has established worship in that way, not because he had to but because he's kind. He's worthy of all glory, but because he loves us so much, he continually gives. And as we give him glory, we get joy. That's why people who don't worry and are unhappy; or people who worship the wrong god, they're unhappy. Or people who worship the right God in the wrong way, they're unhappy. But people who worship Jesus as he instructs, there's joy. There's joy.

Some of you have had those moments where you were in the Spirit, worshipping God, and you were flooded with joy because finally you were doing that for which you were made. And there's this satisfaction there. It is unlike anything else that you have ever experienced. John is trying to articulate this for us with words, but to understand it we must pass through the same experience with him, that we must see Jesus and respond to him. This is the continual pattern of Revelation; Jesus is revealed, people respond; Jesus is revealed, people respond.

I have done my best for you today. I love you, I'm your pastor. My job is to open the Bible and unveil, reveal to you, Jesus and all of his glory. Your job as a people is to respond to him and worship so that he would get glory and you would get joy. That includes we will take part of Communion – his body and blood shed for our sins. That includes singing, which actually is what we give and send to the Throne; it's what he receives from us. We give

of our money, showing that we find him worthy. We depart to live our lives and our lifestyle is an act of worship.

I'll give you one final thought. You really need your imagination to capture this. For some, they struggle because they see Jesus as the humble Galilean peasant. We need to move beyond that and see the exalted Christ on his Throne. For some, they struggle with worshipping Jesus because they have a misunderstanding of the goodness of God. And as they see him, then they're inspired. Still some struggle to worship because they believe that worship is something that will ultimately occur when they see him face-to-face, as 1 Corinthians 13:12 promises that we will. And some of you are thinking, "I can't wait for that day when I see Jesus face-to-face. I can't wait to enter into his Kingdom, I can't wait to pass through the door that John did, I can't wait to hear the angels, I can't wait to see the sea. I can't wait to gaze upon the colors and the lights and the imagery and the acoustics and to sit under the rainbow, and to get down on my knees and to put my crown at his feet. I can't wait for that day. Some day." Think on this.

Ephesians 2:6, the Apostle Paul makes an amazing promise. He says that Jesus Christ died for our sins and arose and that today we are seated where? Where are we seated? We're seated with him. Where? In the Heavens. That's where you are today. Jesus is here, Jesus is there. You are here, you are there. Because of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ you're seated with him in the Heavens. And as we sing, we are there with the angels. And as we worship, we are there with the totality of all of the saints, Old and New Testament – all the nations of the earth who adore Jesus Christ. We are there today. And I'm calling you to respond to him.

So Father God, we come to you now to worship Lord Jesus. We thank you so much that you sit on a Throne. When we see that Throne, it won't have a mirror. We don't sit on it. It won't have another god or a series of gods or goddesses, it won't have a multiplicity of deities; just you, Lord God. I thank you that a door has been opened for us and that we, by faith, may pass through that door if we turn from sin and trust in you. I thank you God that you have made us to be people of worship. I thank you that you have given us ears to hear, you have given us songs to sing. You have given us colors to appreciate and eyes to gaze upon them.

We thank you that you are a beautiful and glorious God who is worthy. We thank you that you have made us as image-bearers in your likeness. We thank you that one day we will hear you rejoice over us with singing; we will hear the harmony of angel, we will participate in the writing of worship songs. That we will know you as we're fully known. And we thank you Lord Jesus that because of your resurrection and because of your Throne, that today we are seated with you in the Heavens. Amen.