



“Worship 24/7/52”

Guys, have you noticed there is this bond between the ladies when they start talking about going thru labor? They get more excited, the pace of their words gets faster, they are INTO it when talking about that experience? And us guys, we just never are going to really understand that, because it's an experience that words just don't fully explain.

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.

It's like soldiers who have gone thru combat -- how do you explain that to someone who has never experienced combat? Words just aren't enough. But between soldiers who have been in combat, have an understanding of what each other went through.

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. Our language doesn't fully have words and images to describe heaven - something that's so different than life on earth. Today, John is trying to describe heaven to you.

John writes: ***After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven.*** John says: "After this" - We've spent the last few weeks the first 3 chapters in Revelation. If you were with us, you remember a description of who Jesus is, and then 7 letters to 7 churches. Now, that part is all wrapped up. That part is closed up. "After this" means now something completely new is being shared. Now starts the description of the end, and it starts by describing an indescribable scene in heaven of the throne and Jesus on it.

A door is opened, right up into heaven. John sees the door in Heaven and he's going to pass through this door.

Then John says: ***“And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet,”*** The voice John heard first – in chapter 1 – was God, was Jesus. Jesus in his power, gives a command – but a gracious command, to see what's going on in heaven and what will happen next. The voice, ***“said come up here and I will show you what must take place after this.”***

Now, you should know that some churches believe in what's called the rapture. If you've ever seen the Left Behind movies or read the books, those are all based on this idea. And the idea is that believers in Jesus are taken up off the earth, before the real bad times – what is called “the tribulation” begins. Believers get the express elevator to heaven and escape all the bad times. They get a free ticket to pass jail, and go straight to heaven. That is a false teaching. That teaching of the rapture is misguided. It leads people to put all their hope in escaping the trouble, and takes their hope away from what Jesus already did for them on the cross.

This verse, “Come up here” is the one verse they base that teaching on. And you can clearly see, this verse means no such thing. Jesus is speaking to John only, “Come, take a look into heaven,” and then John will share what he sees and hears with people as he writes the book of Revelation.

Jesus is speaking to John only, “Come, take a look into heaven,” and then John will share what he sees and hears with us in this book of Revelation.

In verse 2 he says: ***and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.*** The Throne becomes for us the central image that ties together the whole of the book of Revelation. The hero of the book is Jesus; He's victorious. He died and rose again, defeating death, sin, the devil, and all hell and evil. He's victorious so He's sitting on a throne.

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, that Jesus is the victor –

that in the End, He wins -- If you lose sight that we know how the story of this world ends you miss the whole message in this book.

Maybe in your house, you have Dad's chair, or Mom's chair. It's their "throne." And if you sit there, when they come in the room, you better get out of their chair. It's a sign of respect, a sign of authority that they have their throne. Jesus has authority, He earned it, He's victor. He has a throne.

In that day 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?

In that time chairs were uncommon, and thrones were reserved for very special people. There were four people who would get a Throne: a **King** who ruled over a Kingdom; a **judge** who was rendering a verdict about guilt or innocence; a **warrior** who had conquered an enemy; and also a **Priest**, who would mediate between people and 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

³And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

Surrounding the Throne is light and color. God has color. He's beautiful.

Summer officially began last Tuesday. Summer is a season of color – of green trees, blue skies, bright yellow sunshine, and flowers with lots of bright colors. Winter doesn't have as much color. Winter is white and grey and brown. Color is beautiful. If you appreciate color it's because you are made in the image of God. God's creative. He made color. God has color. God is beautiful.

Now, the color is symbolic. **God's character** is beautiful. He is eternal and all-wise. He is all-powerful. But He is loving, kind, forgiving, and tender. When you see God in heaven, you will see

beauty, and see who God is, what He's like, see how He loves, and cares.

Then there's this rainbow. Where in the Bible do we first see a rainbow? After Noah and the flood, right? The rainbow is a sign that God has the power to destroy the whole world with all that water to punish their sin. **The rainbow is a sign** that God forgave their sin – a sign of forgiveness. God also gave the rainbow with a promise – remember? – He's not going to send a flood like that again. So the rainbow is future-oriented. The rainbow around Jesus on the throne in heaven pictures for us **Power, & Forgiveness & Hope.**

That's what surrounds the Throne. Color, visual imagery, beauty. Verse 4 – ***“Surrounding the Throne,”*** – Here are some other things around Jesus' Throne. – ***“Were 24 other Thrones, and seated on them were 24 elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”***

There's a big debate historically. Who's sitting on these thrones? Who are these 24 guys? We know they are not angels because they are wearing crowns. A crown is a sign of victory won. These seem to be people who have made it through life on earth and to heaven. They are victors.

These are called Elders. Often numbers in Revelation are symbolic. And 12, or multiples of 12, is symbolic of the Church of all time – not a building, but God's People. So these 12 are the leaders of the New Testament -- the 12 Apostles -- and the heads of each of the 12 Tribes of Israel. The Old and the New Testament people of God, their leaders. They picture for us **the total group of God's people of all times.**

Here's what comes from the Throne. Jesus is on the Throne, this is what comes from the Throne. Verse 5, ***“From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peels of thunder.”*** That shows Power! You ever have a thunder storm go thru and you just marvel at the power? If there's lightning you don't stay outside. You might get zapped. You show respect to that power by seeking shelter. Well, **God's got power.** And we don't take it lightly. With all God's power, **we treat Him with RESPECT.** God's not someone to be messed with or manipulated. So we treat Him seriously.

And, *In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.* Seven is a symbolic number of fullness and perfection. These 7 lamps are **the perfect and complete Holy Spirit of God.** Again, you've got to use your imagination, to see this.

⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the Bible, the sea was the place where the great sea monster, Leviathan, and the place where the dragon, lived. These two pictured the devil. And the dragon would toss and stir up the sea – and those churning waves pictured the chaos of sin in this world, and the danger of sin.

But this sea is calm. It's quiet. It's tamed. It's conquered. It's stilled. Jesus conquered Satan, He tamed the devil by His dying on the cross and rising on Easter. So John is not afraid, because Jesus conquered sin and the devil.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ 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 like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings.

Well what are these creatures? He keeps saying "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 going to sicken you.

These 4 creatures are angels. A special kind of angel. They actually exist. But the way John describes them is symbolic.

We often picture angels as these harmless, cubby babies, wearing diapers. But angels are not that at all. In the Bible angels are an ARMY, they are warriors, they are strong.

Here there are 4. Four probably represents the 4 corners of the earth. All creation.

They have faces – a lion, an ox, a man, an eagle. These are great creatures, powerful, wise – all the rest of creation is under these creatures. So these are the leaders, the representatives, of **ALL CREATION praising God.** And they have eyes – all over. That pictures that **God sees all & knows all, and CARES for ALL creation.** It's all in His sight; it's all under His care.

And these 4 special angels, initiate / start worship. All creation praises God. All things that are made are drawn together around Jesus for the purpose of worship. That's like the Psalm, *"Everything that has breath should praise the Lord."*

They sing: *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come."* God is Holy. Holy means He is not common. He is special. He's different than us. He is Creator, we are creatures; we are impatient, he is patient; we're short-sighted, he is enduring. We can be judgmental, but He's gracious. God is sinless and we are sinful. God sees and knows your sin. He knows you've messed up. But He doesn't reject you because of your sin. Instead, that's why Jesus came, so he could forgive your sin, and once forgiven, God declares you holy.

He WAS, and IS, and IS TO COME. God is our past, our origin, where we came from. God is all that matters now. God is our future, your destiny. God IS! God is REALITY. God is what MATTERS.

In our world, we tend to think that what's important, what's reality is who's sitting in the Oval Office, or whose comment is getting the most likes on social media. We tend to think reality is our hectic schedule, and our bank balance, and our homes. Those things are so important to us. But God IS. He always was, is now, and always will be. Everything else is just temporary. We tend to worship created things – stuff and people. But everything is just temporary except God. The point is: Worship God alone because He is worthy, He Was, and IS, and IS TO COME. He is reality.

Enjoy your food, enjoy your job, enjoy your lawn. Go for a swim, enjoy going fishing, kiss your wife, play with your kids or grandkids. But worship God. Enjoy creation, worship the Creator. He IS what counts – what matters. God is reality. He WAS, and IS, and IS TO COME.

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Because God IS, Because of who God is and what Jesus has done, the Elders give up their thrones and their crowns. Who does that sound like? Jesus gave up His throne and His crown in heaven, to come to our earth, become one of us, so He could step in your place for us, to take your punishment for sin on Himself, and win your forgiveness, and win heaven for you.

And so, in response to a love this great, the elders, give their very best. They give up their thrones and their crowns, and they bow before the Almighty King, the Everlasting God, who made them, and loves them so, and they offer all they have – their best – in praise and thanks.

That's an amazing, amazing picture, isn't it? Awesome and wonderful!

Now, let me draw some lessons for our lives:

1. Jesus' Throne is Reality.

Worshipping God is EVERYTHING! In your life, coming before Jesus who died and rose again to make you completely new in His forgiveness – this is Everything. This is reality. This is to be your world. Everything else like a hallucination, like a dream. It's only temporary.

Worship is more important for you than anything else you do. Worship is that important for you. So which are you going to choose to engage yourself fully in?

2. Hope is keeping focused on the Throne.

Remember, John was writing to churches struggling with threats and persecution and death. He says, "When you have problems, when you suffer, when you're afraid, when you're tempted to give up, you must come to the throne room. You must see again the One who is seated upon the throne."

Although this world often seems random and chaotic and filled with trouble, John says, "Don't be confused. There is a throne, and there is one who is seated on the throne." It may not always seem like it to you, but there is One who rules this world, One who IS Victorious, and that's Jesus. He will have the last say on this world.

We know that the story of your life and the story of this world ends with Jesus as Victor, on His throne. There IS a day coming when this temporary world and this temporary life will be gone and all that will be is Jesus on His throne and you gathered around thanking and praising Him for His love. So, no matter how hard, no matter how tough, no matter how unfair, no matter how painful, no matter how impossible it looks now, keep looking up. Keep focused on the Throne. Have Hope! Jesus is on the throne!

3. Worship is all about the Throne.

Worship is all about Jesus. All about responding to who He is and what He's done, is doing, and will do.

Worship is not about what style of music you like, if the service is too early, or too late, or too long or too short (I've never heard that one). We often come to worship here and we make it all about ourselves. WORSHIP ISN'T ABOUT YOU AT ALL. It's all about the Throne. Sorry to break the news to you – it's not all about you! It's not.

So just set you aside, and focus on Jesus, focus on the Throne. Worship from your heart, just responding to His grace.

When you come to worship, it is crucial for you to think about Jesus Christ on this Throne in Glory, so that your devotion can be in response to who He is.

As you do, you'll get something – JOY! You'll get joy.

As God gets glory, we get joy. God has established worship in that way, so that as we give Him glory, we get joy.

4. All your life is to be a Throne where Jesus is honored and worshipped.

Where is Jesus' throne here on earth? It's in you. In your heart.

Tomorrow morning when you wake up, make your heart a throne room. You can do this. Tomorrow morning when you first wake up, let your first thought be, "God, I'll carry you in my heart today." That can be your first thought in the morning.

Tomorrow when you go to work, make your work a sacrifice to God. "*Work diligently as unto the Lord,*" Paul says. Give it the best you have tomorrow.

When you get in the car, make it a little throne room. You might want to put on some worship music or just be with God in silence.

Make the table where you eat tomorrow a little throne room. "I often take food for granted, but God, today I'm not going to do that. I want to be grateful that I have a body and that I can nourish it with this food that comes as a gift from you."

Tonight when your head hits the pillow, spend a minute in the throne room just as you're getting ready to go to sleep: "God, I love you, and I'm grateful that you were with me all day." "God, I'm going to sleep in your care all night."

So tomorrow, worship God when things go wrong as well as when things go right. When the car breaks down, the kids are fighting, an unexpected bill comes, somebody lets you down, you're disappointed, you're saddened. In the midst of a busy day, in your heart sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!" When the world is all going nuts around you, when things are going wrong, when people are frantic, come to the throne room. See Jesus in His power, and His love for you. And know, that's all that matters. Everything's OK. You know how the story will end. So just thank and praise Him.

AMEN.
