

Our God Reigns and Rules

Revelation 4:1-5:5

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Opening Song: “Crown Him With Many Crowns”

Sermon Intro Video

Sermon Part 1

Reading of Revelation 4:1-5:5

¹ After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” ² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”*

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall

down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

*11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”*

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

If you watched the news or scrolled through your social media feeds this week, you may have felt your stomach tighten and your heart start racing. Missiles flying, oil prices spiking, airports in chaos, tech giants held accountable for harming our kids, and experts warning of AI upending jobs and society. Doesn't it feel like our world is spinning out of control?

In response to all the uncertainty, I recently posted a devotional entitled, “On His Throne” along with this graphic: “*List of reasons I’m not panicking with what’s going on in the world right now: #1: JESUS.*”

Here’s an excerpt:

God is firmly seated on His throne. He is in sovereign control, and the Lamb has already conquered through His death and resurrection. No war, no crisis, no headline catches Him by surprise or can derail His plan. Jesus holds history in His hands, and He is working His way and His will in order to accomplish His purposes. The world may feel like it’s unraveling, but the One who spoke it into existence is seated on the throne.

We’ll be doing things a bit differently today to reflect the greatness and grandeur of [Revelation 4:1-5:5](#). The sermon will be preached in three parts. A song of praise will follow each section.

For our main idea, I'm going to paraphrase something Corrie ten Boom once said,

There is no panic in Heaven because God has no problems, only plans!

Let's worship as we walk through God's Word.

1. An open door. Listen to Revelation 4:1: ***“After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’”*** The phrase ***“after this,”*** refers to the vision of Christ in chapter 1 and to the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2-3. Now the scene shifts to Heaven, giving us the view from above. One commentator writes, ***“All that is taking place on earth is under the sovereign control of the one who sits on the throne in Heaven.”***

Amazingly, John saw a door standing open in Heaven. In the ancient world, doors often protected what was valuable, suggesting that what John was about to see was a treasured, divine revelation. This echoes Ezekiel 1:1: ***“...the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.”*** Just as the prophet was granted access to a Heavenly vision, John is now invited into the very throne room of God. It's worth noting that the word 'Heaven' appears around 50 times in Revelation, emphasizing that this book gives us a glimpse into the unseen, eternal realm where God reigns.

John hears the same trumpet-like commanding voice of Jesus he first heard in Revelation 1:10: ***“a loud voice like a trumpet.”*** In Scripture, trumpets always signal that something significant is about to happen. They call God's people to worship, summon armies to battle, celebrate victory, announce God's presence, and point to the return of Christ. Later in Revelation 8–11, seven trumpets will sound in judgment. The shrill sound of a trumpet is piercing, impossible to ignore, demanding our attention and our action.

2. An occupied throne. Verse 2 captures what happened next: ***“At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.”*** The word ***“throne”*** is used 14 times in chapters 4-5, and a total of 46 times in Revelation. This throne that ***“stood in heaven,”*** refers to its stability, firmness, and durability. Notice that God the Father is seated ***“on”*** this throne. Psalm 47:8 says, ***“God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.”*** The word ***“sits”*** is in the present tense, meaning He ***“sits continually”*** where He is reigning, not resting. The main message of Revelation is that God triumphs!

In verse 3, we see how John struggles to describe God as words fail Him, just like they did for Ezekiel. The only thing He can think of is to say God's glory looked like the brilliance of precious gems: "***And He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian...***" Jasper was likely a clear diamond and carnelian was blood red. God is pure and holy and sent His Son who forgave our sins through the shedding of His blood. These same stones appear in the high priest's breastplate with carnelian the first and jasper the last stone. Some see a symbolic picture of how this encompasses everything, from the beginning to the end, the Alpha and the Omega.

Next, John describes a rainbow encircling the throne: "***...and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.***" We're introduced to the rainbow in the first book of the Bible as a sign of God's covenant of mercy in the midst of judgment and we're reminded of mercy in the last book of the Bible. One pastor writes, "*This rainbow in Heaven is a reminder that when we arrive there, the storms will be over for the children of God...it is also a reminder that God will judge the earth, but that He will do so in line with His promises and covenants.*"

There is no panic in Heaven because God has no problems, only plans!

3. Ongoing worship. Next, John describes what he sees around the throne in verse 4: "***Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.***" God is at the center of everything and everything revolves around Him.

God is *on* the throne, other thrones are *around* Him, and the first part of verse 5 tells us what comes *from* the throne: "***From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder...***" I like how one paraphrase captures this: "*Lighting flash and thunder crash pulsed from the Throne.*" Lightning and thunder are associated with God's powerful presence in Exodus 19 and God's judgment during the Tribulation in Revelation 8:5.

In the second half of verse 5 and verse 6 the focus shifts to what is *before* the throne: "***...and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.***" The blazing torches point to the fullness and perfection of the Holy Spirit. In John's world, the sea symbolized chaos, danger, and the unknown. But before the throne, what was once a picture of chaos is now perfectly calm. God is not overwhelmed or anxious. He has everything completely under control. What

John saw at the base of the throne was a vast pavement of glass, shining brilliantly like crystal.

In the second half of verse 6 and in verse 7, we're told what else is *around* the throne: ***“And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.”*** There's much conjecture about the identity of these creatures.

Verse 8 describes how these unusual creatures practice unceasing praise: ***“And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’”*** The phrase, ***“never cease to say”*** means, ***“they rest not”*** in their praise of God's holiness. To mention something three times in succession is to elevate it to the superlative degree, to emphasize the breathtaking splendor of God's holiness!

The title ***“Lord God Almighty”*** means, He is the absolute Ruler who has His hand on everything. He's the God of the past, the present, and the future. This refrain is the first of 14 doxologies in Revelation and draws us to the song of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3: ***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”***

Let's stand and prepare to sing that song right now.

Song: “Holy, Holy, Holy”

Sermon Part 2

4. An omnipotent God. In verses 9-10, we see the response to God's resplendent power: ***“And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying...”***

In the presence of the thrice-holy, omnipotent God, every creature instinctively hits the ground. In the Bible, ***“to worship”*** means to prostrate oneself by laying low in reverence and surrender.

Verse 11 describes what these elders exclaimed, “***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.***” The word “*worthy*” means, “*weighty*.” Interestingly, in that culture the Emperor Domitian demanded that his subjects call him, “Our lord and god.” But the elders of Heaven reject every earthly pretender and declare with one voice the weightiness of God by celebrating His worth, His work, and His will.

Every time we gather to worship, we are joining the never-ending song of Heaven. When we face pressure to bow to “lesser lords” (money, success, politics, comfort, self), we must remember Him who alone sits on the throne. God is indescribably beautiful, infallibly faithful, incomparably authoritative, supremely powerful, perfectly holy, uniquely eternal, and completely central to everything. Everything in these chapters is described in its relation to the King on the Throne.

Let’s transition now to a time of worship through song as we sing these lyrics.

*For the Lord God Almighty reigns
Holy, Holy, Holy
Are You Lord God, Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb
You are Holy, Holy, Holy*

Song: “Agnus Dei”

Sermon Part 3

So far, we’ve seen...

- 1. An open door.**
- 2. An occupied throne.**
- 3. Ongoing worship.**
- 4. An omnipotent God.**

There is no panic in Heaven because God has no problems, only plans!

Revelation 4 focuses on worshipping God the Father for His work of creation, while Revelation 5 emphasizes the worship of God the Son for His work of redemption.

5. An ominous scroll. We're introduced to an unusual scroll in 5:1: ***“Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.”*** As John continued to look, he saw a scroll in the right hand of God Almighty. The right hand in the Bible is the hand of power and strength. The word **“scroll”** is found eight times in this chapter and refers to a rolled-up volume with writing on the front and the back.

In the first century, scrolls were made of papyrus and goat skin sown together. They often averaged 15 feet in length. This scroll had writing on both sides, indicating a full or comprehensive message.

This scroll is locked down, or ***“sealed with seven seals.”*** In the ancient world, wax or clay seals were used to secure and authenticate important documents. Some have suggested this resembled a Roman will because they were often sealed with seven seals and could only be opened by the rightful heir. Others see it more like a title deed to earth with the complete record of God's plans, purposes, and promises. G.K. Beale believes the scroll contained *“all sacred history, especially from the cross to the new creation.”*

Either way, the message is clear: this scroll is completely secure, totally authoritative, and utterly inaccessible...unless someone worthy is found to open it.

Interestingly, in Daniel 12:4, Daniel was told to ***“shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end.”*** Now that we're nearing the time of the end, the scroll is ready to be opened but there doesn't appear to be anyone qualified to do so.

6. An overwhelming sorrow. In verse 2, John describes what he heard next: ***“And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’”*** Some believe this might be the angel Michael or the archangel Gabriel, but we don't know for sure. The description **“mighty”** emphasizes that even the most powerful created being cannot open the scroll himself. The word for **“loud”** is the Greek word *meGas*, from which we get mega, which means *“enormous, intense, and penetrating.”* This voice needed to be loud enough to penetrate to every corner of the universe.

This mighty angel continuously proclaimed in a very loud voice, ***“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”*** In other words, who is morally fit to read the scroll and to carry out all that is necessary to redeem the earth?

Verse 3 gives us the very sad results of the search: ***“And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.”*** This can literally be translated, *“Absolutely no one, not even one, anywhere”* was able to open the scroll. The search is met with a deafening silence. There was no one in heaven, on earth, or even under the earth qualified to do so. This is one of the most emphatic negative statements in the Bible. John used a comprehensive three-part formula that covered the entire created order:

- **In Heaven:** angelic beings, including the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, archangels like Michael or Gabriel, and all the holy angels. Even the sinless Heavenly host lack the necessary qualification.
- **On earth:** all living human beings, past, and present. Not Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, the apostles Peter or Paul, Mary, or any other faithful servant. No human, however godly, is worthy.
- **Under the earth:** no departed spirit of the righteous, and no demonic force was qualified.

The issue is not ability or intelligence; it’s *worthiness*. The scroll represents God’s sovereign plan for judgment on evil and the final redemption of creation. Opening it requires someone who:

- Is perfectly holy and without sin.
- Has conquered sin and death.
- Has the legal right as Kinsman-Redeemer to reclaim what was lost.

When John realizes that no created being meets that standard, he falls apart in verse 4: ***“And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.”*** This word for ***“weep”*** means, *“to clamor; wail, and lament loudly.”* It refers to strong unrestrained emotion and uncontrollable sobbing. John is saying something like, *“I wept and wept, and kept on shedding many tears because if no one can open the book, creation will be doomed to live under the curse of sin for eternity.”*

John weeps bitterly because he understands that if the scroll cannot be opened, evil will continue unchecked, redemption will be unfinished, and God’s promises will remain unfulfilled.

7. An overcoming Savior. John goes from despair to delight in verse 5: ***“And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of***

Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” After being commanded to stop weeping and wailing, John is alerted to the appearance of One who alone is worthy. He is given two titles in verse 5 and one in verse 6:

- **The Lion of the tribe of Judah.** This is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy from Genesis 49:9-10: *“Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*
- **The Root of David.** This is a fulfillment of Isaiah 11:1: *“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”* Listen to the words of Jesus found in Revelation 22:16: *“I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”*
- **The Lamb.** John is told about a mighty Lion, but verse 6 says that when he looked *“between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders,”* he saw *“a Lamb standing as though it had been slain...”* John used the word for a little lamb, like a family pet, which would have taken his readers back to the Passover when the Passover lamb was taken in by the family for four days before its blood was applied to the doorposts of their home (Exodus 12:3-6). In the same way, Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and was among the people for several days before His crucifixion, becoming the sacrificial Lamb whose blood brings deliverance from sin. BTW, Jesus appears as the Lamb 31 times in Revelation.

As John looked at this Lamb, he noticed that it had the fresh marks of slaughter on his body. The Lamb, however, was no longer suffering but was standing victoriously as the resurrected Redeemer!

- As the Lion, He is the strength of our salvation.
- As the Root of David, He is the source of our salvation
- As the Lamb, He is the sacrifice of our salvation.

Jesus is the only One worthy to take the scroll and open it because of who He is. As the Lion from Judah’s tribe, He has the power to destroy His enemies. He is

the rightful King as a descendant of David. And He is the full and final sacrifice as the Lamb of God.

Because He is weighty and worthy, He has already conquered and is therefore qualified to ***“open the scroll and its seven seals.”*** The world is His by the right of creation, Calvary, and conquest.

We'll pick up Revelation 5:6-10 at our Good Friday services at 5:30 and 7:00 pm where we will celebrate the Lord's Supper together. Our text for our four Easter weekend services will be from the closing verses in Revelation 5.

No matter how bad the headlines are, there is no panic in Heaven because God has no problems, only plans!

Closing Song: “Is He Worthy?”

Invitation to Throne Room

One way to put this message into practice is to spend much time in the throne room of God in worship and prayer. Hebrews 4:16 says, ***“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”***

Last year, we encouraged everyone to pick up a wristband and pray for the high schooler whose name was written on it who was attending the retreat. The response was incredible, with over 500 wristbands taken. Our junior high students will be going on a “Total Surrender” retreat April 10-12. Please stop by the table in the south lobby to pick up a wristband and prayer card containing specific requests. Thank you for seeing and valuing our students.

Our students love that their church is committed to praying for them for the next couple weeks leading up to the spring retreat. We are excited to see how God will move in the hearts of the next generation.

Good Friday/Easter Invites

As you leave today, we have some additional Good Friday and Easter invites by the doors. Please take a few and hand them out this week. We're also looking for some more greeters. If interested, sign up at the Welcome Center.

New Members

Last weekend, 12 people were baptized and seven became members. This weekend, eight individuals are ready to join!

- Amy Stammer, Sarah Prewitt, Cynthia Jordan, and Vanesa Guenther (Saturday at 5:00).
- Michael Bradley, Matt and Katy Hofer (Sunday at 9:00).
- Linda Midgett (Sunday at 10:45).