

# THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

## Worship In Revelation

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Where Is The Center Of The Universe?

1. Physically
  - a. earth
  - b. solar system
  - c. solar interstellar neighborhood
  - d. milky way galaxy
  - e. local galactic group
  - f. virgo supercluster
  - g. local superclusters
  - h. observable universe
2. Many people talk and act like they are the center of the universe (it is a “selfie” world)
  - a. the world revolves around “me” (instead of a picture of Old Faithful, it is a picture of self with Old Faithful in the background)
  - b. Black Elk quote – “within each of us”
3. The visions in Revelation 4–5 center readers on God and Christ
  - a. humanity is radically displaced from the center of things
  - b. God on His throne represents the very center of all reality
  - c. what could possibly encourage the church more than to see God on His throne surrounded by angelic worshipers?

#### B. John Is Shown A Vision Of Heaven To Let Him See What’s Really Real

1. John is “in the spirit” on the Lord’s Day (he is worshipping) – 1:10
2. He enters the heavenly throne room, he experiences an “apocalypse” (1:1)
  - a. an “unveiling” of reality (revealing not concealing)
  - b. the curtain between the spiritual and physical realms is pulled back and John sees the Creator on His throne

### I. GOD’S THRONE IS THE CENTER OF REALITY

#### A. The Occupant Of The Throne – 4:2, 8, 11; 5:1, 7

1. **Rev. 4:2** Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne
2. The heavenly beings identify the occupant of the throne

- a. **Rev. 4:8** And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."
  - b. **Rev. 4:11** Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."
3. John's vague description of the occupant of the throne is intriguing for its obscurity
- a. **Rev. 5:1** I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne
  - b. **Rev. 5:7** And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne
4. This identification creates an important sense of space and mystery
- a. designates God as one who defies an accurate description
  - b. grand and magnificent, yet close
  - c. the unknowable transcendence of God is protected by focusing on the throne itself and what goes on around it
  - d. this is not the informal "granddaddy" (sugar daddy) God of much contemporary Christian pop theology
  - e. this is the Almighty, before Whom even celestial beings prostrate themselves
    - 1) He is ruling, majestic, glorious, holy, pure, eternal, all-powerful and completely anti-evil
    - 2) He is the Creator who gives and sustains life
  - f. this tells the readers that we can trust God (this is what God's people need)

## B. The Significance Of God's Throne – 4:2

1. The "throne" is one of the primary images of the entire book and it represents the center of ultimate reality
- a. the term "throne" (θρόνος) is used forty-seven times in Revelation (NA 28), mostly with reference to God (1:4; 4:2; 5:1; 7:9; 12:5; 14:3; 16:10; 20:11; 21:3, 5) and 14 times in 4:1-11
  - b. all the subsequent visions originate from the throne of God
  - c. as the divine drama concludes, the "throne of God and of the Lamb" represents the heart of the new heaven and new earth as God's people enjoy His glorious presence
    - 1) **Rev. 22:1** Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb
    - 2) **Rev. 22:3** There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him

2. To say that God is seated on His throne does not mean that God is literally sitting in heaven in a giant chair, any more than saying Jesus is the Lamb of God means He is a four-legged animal
3. **Revelation** shows us through picture language that God is King over all competing kings and that He is the Ruler over all rival rulers
4. Kingdoms come and go, but God on His throne remains forever (the center of all reality is God on His throne)

**C. All Of Creation Revolves Around God's Throne – 4:8, 10-11; 5:11-12, 13**

1. The throne centers and anchors and grounds everything else
2. **As a stone** cast into a pool creates waves that move outward, the presence of God on the throne creates waves of praise that begin with the four creatures beside the throne, then surge outward to a circle of elders, to myriads of angels, and finally to every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, so that all creation joins in giving praises to God and the Lamb
  - a. the four living creatures - 4:8 (**Rev. 4:8** And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME")
  - b. the twenty-four elders - 4:10–11 (**Rev. 4:10-11** the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, <sup>11</sup> "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.")
  - c. all the angelic beings - 5:8–12 (**Rev. 5:11-12** Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.")
  - d. finally, by every creature - 5:13 (**Rev. 5:13** And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever")
4. **God's throne** is like the hub of a wheel with the rim and spokes rotating around it

## II. WORSHIP IS A PROPER RESPONSE TO GOD BEING ON THE THRONE

- A. Revelation Is The Supreme Book Of Worship In The NT – 13:4; 15:4; 9:20-21
1. Revelation tells us that God alone is worthy of worship
  2. What is worship?
    - a. worship is our most intimate and sacred response to God's character and actions
    - b. worship is an act of giving attention to the living God who rules, speaks and reveals, creates and redeems, orders and blesses
    - c. worship is consciously drawing close to God in God ordained ways
  3. One of the big questions in Revelation is whether people will worship God and the Lamb or the dragon and the beast
    - a. the powers of evil challenge God's role and even masquerade as the power over all things on earth
    - b. **Rev. 13:4** they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"
    - c. **Rev. 15:4** Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."
    - d. Revelation uses similar language describe both the worship of God and the worship of Satan
    - e. **Rev. 9:20-21** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; <sup>21</sup> and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts
  4. Worship is at the very center of the cosmic conflict between God and the forces of evil
    - a. we are in a spiritual war and we desperately need a vision of God's throne to stay faithful
    - b. those who struggle with worship are in spiritual trouble
    - c. heaven is the realm of ultimate reality
    - d. true knowledge of God is absolutely essential to the worship of God
- B. We Were Created To Worship – 19:6-7

1. We always find a way to worship something (MSU Sociology 101)
2. Will we worship the right something (the right someone)?
3. We encounter objects of worship everywhere
  - a. idolatry (political, social, economic, sexual, identity, etc.) must be replaced by worship of God
  - b. country music is going in the wrong way
    - 1) "Take me to church" – about sex
    - 2) "You are holy" by Florida-Georgia line – about dating
4. **Psalm 135:15-18** The idols of the nations are *but* silver and gold, The work of man's hands. <sup>16</sup> They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; <sup>17</sup> They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths. <sup>18</sup> Those who make them will be like them, Yes, everyone who trusts in them (you become like what you worship – Ps. 115:8)
5. **Rev. 19:6-7** Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him
  - a. Revelation offers a huge dose of wisdom and encouragement to help us worship the one true God
  - b. Revelation calls us to reject idolatry in its many forms, but idolatry cannot be overcome by warnings and prohibition alone
  - c. we are not made to say "no" to something without saying "yes" to something better
  - d. worship of the one true God has the power to liberate us from our idolatrous addictions
6. Gathering with other believers to worship is one of the most significant things we do
  - a. it orients us to what is real, true
  - b. it is the heartbeat of heaven

### III. WORSHIP: THE HEARTBEAT OF HEAVEN

#### A. John Receives His Vision While Worshipping – 1:10-11, 3

1. **Rev. 1:10-11** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."
2. The "Lord's Day" is Sunday, the first day of the week
3. **Rev. 1:3** Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near

#### B. Worship Is Found Throughout Revelation And Virtually Closes The Book – 4:9-11; 5:14; 7:11-12; 11:16-17; 15:3-4; 19:4; 22:9

1. After all John has learned, experienced, and had been revealed to him, he falls down to worship an angel
2. **Rev. 22:9** But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God
3. Worship matters
4. We need a heavenly vision of true worship to liberate us from the idols that demand our attention and compete for our affections
5. Failure to worship consigns us to a life of spasms and jerks, at the mercy of every advertisement, every seduction, every siren
6. People who do not worship are swept up in a vast restlessness, with no steady direction and no sustaining purpose
7. Worship transforms by providing a heavenly perspective
8. Worship provides strength to persevere
9. Hallelujah God reigns and that reality is the center of the universe

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What are people turning to in an attempt to find a true center for their lives?
2. How can the church help you to trust God Almighty as the only true center?
3. What leads us down the road that we are the center of the universe?
4. How do you define worship?
5. How does Revelation enhance our understanding of worship?
6. How does it deepen our worship to know that we worship God for who He is and for what He had done and what He will do?