

Revelation 4 Game of Thrones

Don't let that title fool you. I've never seen the show and don't intend to, but it does give a good perspective on what Revelation is all about...

It is about THE THRONE of God, and it's no game. It is life and death as the enemy, The Dragon, Satan seeks to usurp the throne of the universe.

Which throne will you go to? Which throne will have your allegiance?

The Throne of God or the throne of Satan (under the guise of the spirit of the age and fallen culture)

As we saw last week, chapter 4 has a big emphasis on THE THRONE OF God IN HEAVEN.

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads... and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. ... 8 And the four living creatures, ... 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."

9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 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, 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."

The Theology of God's Throne

The Pretenders to the Throne

The Spiritual Psychology of the Throne

The Theology of God's Throne

The word "throne" is used 13 times in this chapter. In some circles that is what we'd call a clue as to what the chapter is about – the THRONE AND WHO RULES FROM IT.

As we move further along in Revelation, we'll see the unveiling of the cosmic battle between God and Satan.

The throne is the symbol of RULING AND JUDGING.

Revelation makes it clear as to who rules and who judges – The Lord God almighty, who was, who is and who is to come. We looked at the God Who Reigns last week, so I'll be brief on this point. There is no one or nothing that compares with the Lord God Almighty. He alone is worthy to rule and judge, because He alone is Holy, Almighty, and Eternal. He alone is Wise, gracious, compassionate, and abounding in lovingkindness. He alone knows the beginning from the end. With the twenty-four elders around the throne, we too should bow and say...

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."

The Pretenders to the Throne

Sadly, the history of the human race shows that we want to take the throne of God and declare ourselves to be autonomous creatures. God's enemy, the serpent, appears in Gen 3 to tempt those made in God's image. How he got there is not explained. His cosmic battle with God began long ago. While Satan will not

be allowed to enter the “new earth”, he was allowed to enter and do his work in the garden. Revelation will reveal how it plays out and how Christ conquers once and for all. Satan was the first to rebel against God, and he is always seeking to recruit others to his rebellion. The original sin in the Garden was that of seeking to make oneself equal with God. This self-deification has been the source of all our sin and sorrow.

PRINCIPLE #1: EACH GENERATION MUST DECIDE TO WHICH THRONE IT WILL BOW – God’s or Man’s

There is a reason why the word and image of a throne is used over 40 times in Revelation. It reminds us of the ongoing reality of a real-life cosmic Game of Thrones that is going on in the world.

This will become clearer as we get further along, but foundation is being laid here in ch 4-5.

The questions at stake are, “Who will be worshipped as King of Kings? Who is worthy to receive glory and honor and power?”

The answer is either God or someone/something else – Man or Satan. The CREATOR or the creature. The two thrones represent two very different paths and two different sets of consequences.

Worshipping at the throne of God leads to intimacy with Him and power for overcoming in the face of testing, trials, and tribulations. It results in the blessings that belong to those who conquer:

SEVEN PROMISES TO THE ONE WHO CONQUERS IN CHRIST’S LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

To the one who conquers...

- ❖ Rev 2:7 I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.
- ❖ Revelation 2:11: he will not be hurt by the second death.
- ❖ Revelation 2:17: I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.
- ❖ Revelation 2:26–28: to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, ... even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star.
- ❖ Revelation 3:5: will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.
- ❖ Revelation 3:12: I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.
- ❖ Revelation 3:21: I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Overcoming is a result of regularly praising God who is on THE THRONE.

Babylon, a.k.a. ROME represents The PRETENDERS who say that worshipping at the throne of the creature rather than the CREATOR is the way to find or express yourself and march to a different drummer. It is actually the outcome of those who “have ears but DO NOT hear”.

Worshipping the idols of creation – either Man, or those that are manmade- is a manifestation of rebellious unbelief. It is a challenge to the authority of the One on the throne, and that challenge may express itself in cultic, political, and economic terms. (Friesen- Imperial Cults p.209)

This Idolatrous creature-oriented worship brings a different result.

ROMANS 1

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

21 For even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (DID NOT WORSHIP HIM)

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

We become like what we worship.

If we worship the Almighty, wise, sovereign, holy, gracious creator God, then those traits will form and shape us.

If we worship the frail, fickle, proud, self-centered, petty, corrupt, power hungry, creature, then those traits will form and shape us.

Now I need to explain some things that will become clearer as we move through this book. The issue of whose throne will we bow to is crucial for our daily lives. It is an issue of theology, faith, and practice, even if doesn't always look like it. It may look like an issue of culture or politics, but there is a theological root.

POLITICS IS DOWNSTREAM FROM CULTURE AND CULTURE IS DOWNSTREAM FROM THEOLOGY.

EVERY ISSUE OF SIGNIFICANCE IS ROOTED IN THEOLOGY i.e., what we believe about God and how He has spoken to us.

It may look like a political issue when it is really a theological issue. God was there first. The secular world demands that we cede the terrain to them and their theology of unbelief, as if it were somehow neutral.

There are four key areas where God has instituted clear guidelines for human flourishing – **the value of life, the family (marriage, sexuality/gender), the church /worship, and the State.**

When we veer from God's Word in those areas or we mix them up, then we create a disordered society.

God WAS THERE FIRST. He instituted those domains, so when it becomes necessary to discuss current implications regarding those areas, we are NOT meddling in "politics". We are dealing with religious issues. For years Christians have been accused of getting "too political" when addressing certain issues. **The reality is that they are engaging with the intersection of competing religious worldviews, which are played out in a political realm.**

We must decide WHICH THRONE WE WILL BOW TO – the one where God sits and reigns over all or the one where MAN SITS and seeks to usurp the place of God. The church faces an enemy that will use human government and the social forces of education, media, and entertainment in its battle against the kingdom of God. In battling the kingdom of God, the attacks are made against the church, for that is where the authority of the Lord God Almighty is recognized.

Societies have suffered when churches remained silent when they should have spoken up. Two examples...

EX: for many years, far too many Christians and churches were silent on the issues of life and human dignity. As a result, we saw racism flourish in the culture because those created in the image of God were treated as less than human.

EX: for years Christians and churches were silent about the sexual and moral revolution and its consequences – unwanted pregnancies. As a result, the unborn, created in the image of God, were/are treated as less than human so they can be killed.

When the church ceases to speak into issues with biblical truth and wisdom, some other voice will speak. It is a voice of the enemy as he intrudes into God's domain under the guise of "politics or social issues." Sadly, IT IS A VOICE that becomes more and more authoritarian.

AUTHORITARIANISM IS THE DEFAULT MODE OF FALLEN HUMANITY

"Little Napoleon Complex" – just give someone a bit of power and he/she will seek to expand it and enjoy lording it over you.

Ex: WE SAW this in France each time we had to renew our papers to remain in the country.

This is true in the church, the state, the REC leagues, schools, and all the alphabet agencies of governments – DMV, FBI, FDA, CIA, CDC, WHO, POTUS, SCOTUS, GOP, DNC, PRC, G7, WEF, NEA,

Authoritarianism is the essence of the spirit of the age. It may be as simple as a man and woman in a garden wanting to be like God, or a brother killing his brother out of jealousy, or a brother deceiving a brother and his parents to gain advantage or any number of biblical examples. It may look like the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Pharisees, monarchs, a feudal system, a caste system, The Redcoats, Mao's Little Red Book, the hammer and sickle, the brown shirts, white hoods, Jim Crow, a new deal, the great society, The Inquisition, The Moral Majority, unelected bureaucrats, or the so called enlightened alphabet Elites who want to tell us how to run our lives.

It is a play book that is brought out in every generation and every culture. You see it with kids in a sandbox and adults at work or at play or and the family or in politics.

Every culture has its own manifestation of authoritarianism or some sort of pecking order that seeks to rule. It will manifest itself among children and prison inmates

It is simply the rejection of The Sovereign authority of God himself who is our creator, and he alone has the right to rule. We'll see it clearly unveiled in Revelation 12 and 13 as the dragon seeks to destroy the child.

If we remove God from the equation, then the state will creep into as many areas as we allow it.

The Spiritual Psychology of the Throne

It is good for our souls to meditate on this Heavenly Vision for we were made to know and worship God. In doing so we get a right understanding of God and of ourselves. We see that we are limited and are not autonomous.

There is a great relief in knowing our limitations because it keeps us from trying to fill a role for which we are not competent. We are not equipped to be God. We don't have the mental, emotional, or psychological bandwidth to run the universe.

Herein lies the problem for modern man. In seeking to be God and trying to redefine the world in our own image, we get overwhelmed. This is especially true today when everyone is doing the same thing and they are demanding that we all bow to their identity and version of reality.

EX: Charlie Kirk –Nov 15th <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/lgbtqi-members-of-generation-z-face-unique-social-and-economic-concerns/>

82 percent of Gen Z respondents reported feeling so sad that nothing could cheer them up to some degree in January 2020, compared with 64 percent of Millennials, 46 percent of Gen X, and 30 percent of Baby Boomers.

Gen Z – least religious and most depressed generation. I propose that there is a correlation between the two.

When you reject God, then you or someone or something else will try to take His place, and whatever or whoever that is cannot pull it off. The result is angst, despair, feeling out of sorts. You're trying to play God

and you just don't have the skill set to do it. It's a horrible feeling when you realize that you're in over your head.

EX: (all illustrations break down...) Spring of 2005 I had taken a job as Assist Pastor of a larger church in Gainesville Ga. During my first couples of weeks, I was invited to play in a golf tournament with a group of men from the church, and praise God that they were very gracious.

It was scheduled to be about 78 holes in one day. I was no golfer, having played a full round maybe once in my life. I was teamed up with some men who actually knew how to play. I was in WAY OVER MY HEAD, and it was a miserable day. I had no business trying to do that. I was not competent, and it was impossible to fake it. I wanted the earth to open up and swallow me.

The only thing that kept me from despair was knowing that my identity and value is in Christ, and not in my ability to meet the expectations of others. God is still on the Throne even when I embarrass myself.

PRINICPLE: #2

IF YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE TRUE HUMAN FLOURISHING, YOU MUST COME TO THE THRONE AND WORSHIP THE CREATOR.

FIRST of all, it means coming to know Christ as savior and Lord. Jesus sets us free from the burden of trying to be God when we admit our need and trust in Him.

Secondly, staying power requires Prayer Power, particularly the Prayer of Praise.

Praise is good for the soul because we were made for God and His glory.

“God inhabits the prayers of His People” Ps 22:3

“Sing for joy in the LORD, you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.. Ps 33:1”

**30 Day Challenge: INCORPORATE the praise sections of Revelation 4 into your personal time with God, especially in times of trial and tribulation.

Staying power requires a right perspective of who is in CONTROL.

God is in control, not man, not Satan, not Babylon. Even though at times it may seem like God has lost His grip on things, He is working His sovereign eternal will. If we don't know that, then it is hard to persevere.

Life looks different when viewed from an eternal heavenly perspective. It is this perspective that has led God's people to say over the years,

“Take my life and let it be,
consecrated Lord to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.”

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