

Heart of Worship, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 12: Worship and the Glory to Come

Revelation 4:1–11

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal matter in this final lesson is the worship of heaven and the glory toward which all history and all our worship are moving. John, exiled and suffering, is shown an open door into the throne room of God, and the first thing he sees is worship: the holy God enthroned, the living creatures crying holy without ceasing, the elders casting their crowns and declaring God worthy as Creator of all. This vision serves as the capstone of the study, lifting the worship we have examined throughout into its eternal context.

Be ready to teach this passage in a way that is faithful to the reign of Christ now. Revelation is sometimes misread as pointing to a future earthly political kingdom yet to be established. But the vision shows God already on his throne, reigning in the present, the throne that was never empty. The kingdom of God arrived with Christ and was established when the church began; Christ reigns now at the Father's right hand. The hope this passage holds out is not an earthly thousand-year reign but the consummation of all things, when faith gives way to sight and the redeemed worship God forever. Present God's present sovereignty and the eternal glory to come, not a future earthly political reign.

Keep the lesson aimed at the heart and at hope. For a church that worships amid weakness, distraction, and sometimes suffering, this vision is profound encouragement: the throne is occupied, God reigns, and our imperfect, interrupted worship is a rehearsal for an eternity of unbroken praise. The aim is that your students lift their eyes from the small worship of an hour to the glory that is coming, surrender their own crowns to the worthy God, and let the certainty of heaven's worship deepen and steady their worship now.

Question 1

Student Question:

The first thing John sees through the open door is "a throne standing in heaven, with one seated on the throne" (v. 2). Why is it significant that the vision of heaven centers on a throne, and what does the throne tell us about who God is and how he relates to all of creation and history?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the throne. The first and central feature of heaven is a throne with One seated on it. Before John sees anything else, he sees that God reigns. The universe is not chaos or chance; at its center is a throne, and it is occupied.

Explain the significance. A throne speaks of sovereignty, authority, and rule. The God of heaven is not a distant force but a reigning King who governs all creation and history from his throne. Nothing happens outside his rule.

Apply it. This is the foundation of all worship and all hope. We worship the One who reigns, and we can trust him because he is on the throne. Encourage the class to let the reality of God enthroned anchor both their worship and their confidence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Heaven centered on the throne of God (Revelation 4:2).
- God as the sovereign King who reigns over all creation and history.
- The universe governed from an occupied throne, not left to chance.
- God's reign as the foundation of worship and hope.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the vision of heaven center on a throne?
- What does the throne tell us about who God is?
- How does God's reign anchor our worship and confidence?

Question 2

Student Question:

John's vision of the throne reframed all his suffering on Patmos by showing him who truly reigns. When your own troubles loom large, how might fixing your eyes on God enthroned in heaven change the way you see them? What current burden looks different under the reality of his throne?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Connect the throne to John's circumstances. John was suffering exile when this vision came. Seeing the throne reframed everything; his trials stood under the reality of a reigning God. The throne did not remove his hardship, but it changed its meaning.

Help students apply it to their burdens. When troubles loom large, they can fill our whole horizon. Fixing our eyes on God enthroned shrinks them to their true size, not by denying them, but by placing them under his rule.

Encourage a concrete shift. Ask each person to bring a current burden consciously under the reality of the throne, to worship the reigning God in the middle of it. Worship that lifts its eyes to the throne steadies the troubled heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The throne reframing suffering and trial.
- God's reign changing the meaning of our hardships.
- Worship that places our burdens under God's rule.
- Fixing our eyes on the enthroned God in trouble.

Discussion Prompts

- How might fixing your eyes on the throne change how you see your troubles?
- What current burden looks different under the reality of God's reign?
- How can worship steady you in the middle of hardship?

Question 3

Student Question:

The four living creatures never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty" (v. 8). What does the threefold cry of "holy" declare about God, and why is his holiness the heart of heaven's worship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Focus on the threefold cry. The living creatures never cease to say, Holy, holy, holy. The repetition is the Hebrew way of expressing the superlative: God is holy beyond all comparison, utterly set apart in his purity and majesty.

Explain why holiness is central. Of all God's attributes, holiness is the one heaven sings without ceasing. It speaks of his absolute purity, his transcendence, his otherness. To worship God truly is to stand in awe of his holiness.

Apply it. This calls our worship to reverence and wonder before a holy God, the theme we have seen throughout the study. Encourage the class to let the unceasing holy of heaven shape the awe of their own worship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The threefold cry of holy declaring God's absolute holiness (Revelation 4:8).
- Holiness as the attribute heaven praises without ceasing.
- God's purity, majesty, and transcendence.
- Reverence and awe as the response to God's holiness.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the threefold cry of holy declare about God?
- Why is God's holiness the heart of heaven's worship?
- How should God's holiness shape the awe of our worship?

Question 4

Student Question:

Heaven's worship is unceasing, "day and night," while our worship is easily interrupted and crowded out. What most often crowds worship out of your daily life, and what would it look like to let a spirit of worship run more continually through your days?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Contrast heaven's worship with ours. Heaven worships day and night, unceasingly, while our worship is easily interrupted, crowded out by distraction, busyness, and the press of life.

Help students examine the crowding. Ask what most often pushes worship out of their days: hurry, worry, entertainment, sheer forgetfulness. Naming the crowders is the first step toward a more continual spirit of worship.

Point toward continual worship. While we cannot literally worship every moment as the living creatures do, we can cultivate a heart that turns to God through the day, in gratitude, prayer, and praise. Encourage one practical way to let worship run more continually.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unceasing worship of heaven contrasted with our interrupted worship.
- The distractions that crowd worship out of daily life.
- Cultivating a continual spirit of worship through the day.
- Worship as a posture of the heart, not only an event.

Discussion Prompts

- What most often crowds worship out of your daily life?
- What would a more continual spirit of worship look like for you?
- How can you turn your heart to God through an ordinary day?

Question 5

Student Question:

The twenty-four elders "cast their crowns before the throne" (v. 10), surrendering their own honor to God. What does this act reveal about the nature of true worship, and why does genuine worship always involve giving glory to God rather than seeking it for ourselves?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Unfold the casting of crowns. The elders take their own crowns, the symbols of their honor and reward, and cast them before the throne. They return every honor to God, claiming nothing for themselves.

Draw out the nature of worship. True worship is self-giving, not self-seeking. It directs all glory to God and keeps none back. The casting of crowns is worship in its purest form: every honor surrendered to the only One who is worthy.

Apply it. This exposes worship that subtly seeks something for the self, recognition, feeling, advantage. Genuine worship lays its crowns down. Encourage the class to make their worship a glad surrender of every honor to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The elders casting their crowns before the throne (Revelation 4:10).
- True worship as self-giving, directing all glory to God.
- Surrender of every honor to the only worthy One.
- Worship that keeps nothing back for the self.

Discussion Prompts

- What does casting crowns reveal about the nature of worship?
- Why does true worship give glory to God rather than seek it for self?
- How can your worship become a surrender of every honor to God?

Question 6

Student Question:

We are all tempted to keep our crowns, to hold onto our achievements, status, and self-importance. Which crown do you find hardest to lay before God, and how might surrendering it free you to worship him more fully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Make the crowns personal. We all wear crowns of a sort: achievements, status, reputation, our sense of control and self-importance. Worship calls us to lay them down, and some are harder to surrender than others.

Help students identify their crown. Ask which honor they find hardest to lay before God, the one they most want to keep for themselves. That crown often marks where worship is most needed and most resisted.

Show the freedom in surrender. Laying our crowns down is not loss but freedom; we were never meant to carry the weight of our own glory. Encourage each person to surrender one crown to God this week as an act of worship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The crowns of achievement, status, and self-importance we hold.

- Worship as the surrender of our crowns to God.
- The freedom found in laying down our own glory.
- Identifying where worship is most resisted in us.

Discussion Prompts

- Which crown do you find hardest to lay before God?
- How might surrendering it free you to worship more fully?
- What would it look like to lay that crown down this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

The elders praise God as worthy “for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (v. 11). How does God’s work as Creator ground his worthiness to be worshiped, and why does all creation owe him glory?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Focus on the ground of worship given here. The elders declare God worthy because he created all things, and all things exist by his will. Creation is the basis of his claim to worship; he made everything and sustains it.

Explain the logic. Because God is the source of all that exists, all that exists owes him glory. We worship him not as one option among many but as the Creator to whom we and everything else belong by right.

Apply it. This grounds worship in reality, not mere sentiment. The God we praise is the Maker of heaven and earth, and worship is the creature giving back to the Creator the glory due his name. Encourage the class to worship God as the worthy Creator of all.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s worthiness grounded in his work as Creator (Revelation 4:11).
- All things existing by God’s will and for his glory.
- Creation as the basis of God’s claim to worship.
- Worship as the creature giving glory to the Creator.

Discussion Prompts

- How does God’s work as Creator ground his worthiness to be worshiped?
- Why does all creation owe God glory?
- How does worshipping God as Creator anchor our praise in reality?

Question 8

Student Question:

If God created all things and sustains them by his will, then everything you have and are comes from him. How does recognizing God as your Creator and sustainer shape your sense of dependence and gratitude, and where do you need to live more consciously as his creature?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Turn creation personal. If God made all things and sustains them by his will, then everything we have and are comes from him. We are creatures, utterly dependent, owing him our very breath.

Help students feel the dependence. Modern life fosters the illusion of self-sufficiency. Recognizing God as Creator and sustainer punctures that illusion and awakens gratitude and humility.

Encourage conscious creaturehood. Ask where students need to live more consciously as God's creatures, dependent and grateful, rather than as self-made and self-reliant. Worship grows naturally from a heart that knows it owes everything to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Everything we have and are coming from God the Creator.
- Human dependence on God for life and breath.
- Gratitude and humility flowing from recognizing our creaturehood.
- Worship arising from conscious dependence on God.

Discussion Prompts

- How does recognizing God as Creator shape your sense of dependence?
- Where do you live as if you were self-sufficient?
- How does knowing you owe everything to God stir worship?

Question 9**Student Question:**

John's vision shows God already enthroned and reigning, surrounded by ceaseless worship, the throne that was never empty. The kingdom of God is not a future earthly political reign still to be set up; Christ reigns now at the Father's right hand, and his people worship the God who "was and is and is to come" (v. 8). How does this scene assure us that God is sovereignly on his throne in the present, even amid suffering and apparent chaos, and how does it point us to the consummation, when faith gives way to sight and the redeemed worship God forever? Why is the worship of the throne, rather than any earthly reign, the true hope toward which history is moving?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal heart of the final lesson, and the capstone of the study. The vision shows God already enthroned, reigning in the present, surrounded by ceaseless worship. The throne was never empty. This assures us that whatever suffering or chaos we see, God is sovereignly on his throne now, and history is held in his hand.

Teach the present reign of Christ carefully. Some read Revelation as pointing to a future earthly political kingdom yet to be set up, a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. But Scripture teaches that the kingdom of God arrived with the ministry of Jesus and was established when the church began, and that Christ reigns now at the right hand of the Father. The throne in this vision is occupied in the present. We do not wait for God to begin reigning; he reigns already.

Point to the true hope: the consummation. The forward look of this passage is not toward an earthly political reign but toward the day when faith gives way to sight and the redeemed worship God forever. The God who was and is and is to come will bring history to its goal in the eternal worship of his people. That, and not any earthly kingdom, is the hope toward which all things move.

Bring it home as encouragement. For a worshiping church amid weakness and suffering, this is steadying news. The throne is occupied, God reigns now, and our imperfect worship is a rehearsal for an eternity of unbroken praise. Help your class find both present confidence and future hope in the worship of the throne, and let it lift their eyes above every earthly trouble to the reigning God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God already enthroned and reigning in the present (Revelation 4:2).
- The kingdom established with Christ and the church; Christ reigning now.
- No future earthly thousand-year political reign as the church's hope.
- The true hope as the consummation and eternal worship of God.
- Present confidence amid suffering because the throne is occupied.
- Our worship now as a rehearsal for unbroken praise to come.

Discussion Prompts

- How does this scene assure us God is sovereignly on his throne now?
- Why is the church's hope the eternal worship of God, not an earthly reign?
- How does the reigning God steady us amid suffering?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over this whole study and over John's vision of the throne: worship in spirit and truth, in the assembly and in all of life, now lifted up into the eternal worship of heaven. Name one specific way this glimpse of the glory to come is reshaping how you worship today, and one

concrete step you will take so that your worship now becomes a faithful rehearsal for the song that never ends.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this final capstone to gather the entire study. From worship in spirit and truth, through the assembly, the Supper, singing, giving, prayer, the word, reverence, and the whole-life offering, all of it now rises into the eternal worship of heaven. Invite students to see the whole journey and its destination.

Press for one concrete way the glory to come reshapes worship now. The certainty of heaven's worship should change today: deepening reverence, steadying us in trial, freeing us to surrender our crowns, and stirring us to worship as those rehearsing for eternity.

End at the throne, and with the Lamb. Encourage the class that the worship they offer now, imperfect and interrupted, is being taken up into something that will never end. One day they will join the song around the throne. Send them out worshipping in hope, with their eyes lifted to the reigning God and the glory that is coming.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The whole study gathered into the eternal worship of heaven.
- The glory to come reshaping worship in the present.
- Worship now as a rehearsal for the song that never ends.
- The throne and the Lamb as the destination of all worship.

Discussion Prompts

- How is this glimpse of glory reshaping the way you worship today?
- What step will you take so your worship now rehearses for eternity?
- How does the hope of heaven's worship lift your eyes above your troubles?