

# “Who is on the throne?”

<b><u>Occasion</u></b>	Evening Service at Therfield Chapel
<b><u>Day, Date &amp; Time</u></b>	Sunday 3 August 2008 at 18:30
<b><u>Basis</u></b>	Revelation 4
<b><u>Reading</u></b>	Revelation 4
<b><u>Songs</u></b>	from Mission Praise: 470, 454, 405, 507, 570, 237, 596
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Where would you go to find God?  
If you wanted to find him,  
where would you concentrate your search?

On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first human to travel into space  
and return.

Later, Nikita Khrushchev,  
the then First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union  
was reported to have said that "Gagarin flew into space,  
but didn't see any God there".

It is often thought that Gagarin said these words,  
but that is not the case.

What Gagarin did say was “ The Earth is blue. How wonderful. It is amazing. ”

C S Lewis, in an essay entitled the Seeing Eye,  
said this by way of response:

***The Russians, I am told, report that they have not found God in outer space. On the other hand, a good many people in many different times and countries claim to have found God, or been found by God here on earth...***

C. S. Lewis - Christian Reflections, p209

***Space travel has nothing to do with the matter. To some, God is discoverable everywhere; to others nowhere. Those who do not find Him on earth are unlikely to find Him in space. (Hang it all, we're in space already; every year we go a huge circular tour in space.) But send a saint up in a spaceship and he'll find God in space as he found God on earth. Much depends on the seeing eye.***

C. S. Lewis - Christian Reflections, p213

Today, few people are looking.  
The battle is in a different place.

The Atheists,  
led by Richard Dawkins are on the attack.  
In his book, 'The God Delusion',  
Dawkins puts forward powerful arguments that their cannot possibly be a God,  
that those of us who believe that there is a God are deluded.  
Not only that, but the Abrahamic God,  
i.e. the God that Christians, the Muslims and the Jews revere,  
is the most dastardly being one would wish to imagine  
and why would anyone want to follow such a brutal God anyway.

In fact many of Dawkins' arguments are weak.  
He attacks Christianity at its weakest points  
and gives no credence to its strengths,  
and there are real and solid responses that can and have been made.  
Nevertheless, his book has appealed to a very wide market,  
he has sold millions of copies world-wide  
and has had a profound effect on the thinking of our nation.

But all is not lost.

The rise of fundamentalist Islam has put religion on the agenda,  
more than for a very long time.  
In our post-modern society all 'faiths' as they are now called have equal standing.  
Religion is in the news.  
Only this week a schoolgirl won her case to wear a Hindu religious bangle  
(known as the '*kara*')  
at school in the face of school rules  
which outlawed the wearing of jewellery.

Not so long ago,  
a check-in clerk at British Airways fought for her right to wear a Christian  
cross at work,  
and a teenage girl was refused the right to wear a purity ring at school.  
And we are constantly faced with religious movements  
using their faith to justify their actions and gain political ends.

In films, we recently had Amazing Grace, in our cinemas,  
a wonderful film demonstrating the power of a Christian perspective,  
to abolish the slave trade in the then British Empire.  
Then there was 'the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe',  
and now 'Prince Caspian',  
two of Lewis's famous Christian allegories in the Tales of Narnia series.  
Religion and talk of religion is all around us.

Yet the question remains.  
If there is a God,  
where is he,  
how can he be found  
and does it matter?

Well if there is a God,  
it certainly matters,  
because he is our maker  
and we are his subjects.

As to where to find him,  
we must look to see if he has revealed himself to us.

Lewis suggests that it's no good looking for Shakespeare in his plays,  
because he wrote them  
and by definition is not one of the players.

But you may see a lot of Shakespeare if you consider him as the author.  
And so it is with God.

You won't see him wandering around his creation,  
but you will see something of him  
if you see him as the creator of what we see.

The epistle to the Romans says this:

***<sup>18</sup>The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,<sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.***

(Romans 1:18-20)

So we have the revelation of God in his creation.

But we also have the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

For, of course, God did wander around his creation, in the form of Jesus Christ,  
and that is the story of the new Testament.

Today, we continue our studies in the book of Revelation at the end of our Bibles.

John, who wrote this book, was one of Jesus' closest disciples  
and in his latter years, while in exile on the Isle of Patmos,  
he received visions which are recorded for us in this book.

To understand the book it may be helpful to consider it like a play,  
or a drama.

On this model, the drama is presented in 8 scenes,  
sandwiched between a prologue and an epilogue.

We looked at the prologue some weeks ago in the first 8 verses of chapter 1.  
Then we looked at scene 1,

where John sees the risen Lord in all his glory,  
One like a Son of Man, with blazing eyes and feet like bronze glowing  
in a furnace, standing amongst the seven golden lamp stands.  
And we considered in detail each one of his messages to the seven churches  
from Ephesus to Laodicea.

Today the scene changes and John sees through an open door into heaven,

and in this scene we will see the lamb of God open the seven seals.

In the third scene we shall hear seven trumpets warning the world of Judgement.  
In the fourth scene we shall see seven visions of cosmic conflict.  
In the fifth scene we shall see seven bowls of punishment poured out on the world  
In Scene 6 there are seven Words of Justice.  
In Scene 7 there are seven visions of ultimate reality.  
and in the 8<sup>th</sup> scene we see 7 visions of Jerusalem,  
the bride of Christ.

So here we are in scene 2  
and the stage is set for what we shall consider in the next couple of weeks.  
The door opens into heaven and John is called up  
and he reports to the beleaguered churches of his day  
and to us 2000 years later, what he saw.

He sees a throne in heaven with someone on it.

Who?

Tellingly he doesn't give him a name (and neither does anyone else).  
All John can say about the one on the throne is that the one who sat there had the  
appearance of Jasper and Carnelian.

These were semi-precious stones of John's time,  
one green and the other red  
and were the best he could do to describe the brilliance and brightness  
of the multi-coloured image  
he saw on the throne.

A rainbow encircled the throne.

John says it resembled an emerald.

Again he struggles for words to describe the brilliance and beauty of what he saw.  
From the throne came flashes of lightning,

rumbles  
and peals of thunder.

In front of the throne seven lamps were burning and

John recognises these as the seven spirits or the sevenfold Spirit of God.

And in front of and behind the throne was what looked like a sea of glass,  
clear as crystal.

All of these symbols, John would recognise.

God set his rainbow in the sky after Noah came out of the Ark  
reminding us whenever it rains and the sun shines too  
that he will never again destroy all life in that way.

(Genesis 9)

The thunder and lightning remind us of Mount Sinai,  
when the ten commandments were given.

(Exodus 19:16ff)

There was a seven-branched lamp-stand in the tabernacle,  
And there was a ‘sea’ (a great bronze basin for ritual washing)  
in the temple at Jerusalem

(Exodus 35:31-33)

(2 Chronicles 4:2-6)

John also saw, in the centre, around the throne, four living creatures,  
one was like a lion,  
the second like an ox,  
the third had the face of a man  
and the fourth was like an eagle.  
They each had six wings and eyes covered their bodies.

These creatures are not the same as those seen by Ezekiel,  
but the similarities are too striking to miss.  
In Ezekiel’s vision of the glory of God, there were also four beasts.  
Each had four faces,  
that of a man,  
that of a lion,  
that of an ox  
and that of an eagle.

(Ezekiel 1)

The whole scene that John sees, throbs with Old Testament images.

Surrounding the throne are twenty-four other thrones,  
and on these sit 24 elders dressed in white.  
They had golden crowns upon their heads.

This is the scene in heaven,  
but listen and watch.

The living creatures are chanting continuously  
- day and night they never stop.

But what are they saying?

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

And as they do so,  
the twenty four elders fall down before the throne  
and cast their crowns before Him,  
and worship him with the words:

***“You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
To receive glory and honour and power,  
For you created all things,  
And by your will they were created and have their being”.***





nor mathematics,  
nor philosophy  
can answer why we are so wonderfully and beautifully made,  
nor why we are here,  
nor the purpose of our being,  
nor why we inherently long for a relationship with the One who made us.  
Only a loving God,  
who gave his only Son to redeem us and draw us back to himself  
can answer that.

So who is on the throne?

In the vision,  
there is no question it is the Lord God Almighty  
who was,  
and is,  
and is to come.

But who will you enthrone in your heart?

I pray that you will place him,  
the Lord of lords and the King of kings  
at the very centre of your being  
and crown him Lord of your life.

May it be so

Amen