

April 22  
Lesson 8 (NIV)

# THE LORD GOD

## ALMIGHTY

DEVOTIONAL READING: Revelation 19:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 4

### REVELATION 4:1-6, 8-11

<sup>1</sup>  
After  
this I



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looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” <sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup> Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. <sup>5</sup> From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup> Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

<sup>8</sup> Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

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

<sup>9</sup> Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

“**You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they were created  
and have their being.**”

## KEY VERSE

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”—Revelation 4:11*

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the content of John’s vision in [Revelation 4](#).
2. Explain the worship reality behind the text’s symbols.
3. Specify one way to enhance his or her own approach to worship.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

- A. Thrones
- B. Lesson Background

### I. Vision of Heaven ([REVELATION 4:1, 2](#))

- A. Open Door ([v. 1](#))
- B. Majestic Throne ([v. 2](#))

### II. Arrangement of Heaven ([REVELATION 4:3-6a](#))

- A. On the Throne ([v. 3](#))  
*The Crown Jewels*
- B. Around the Throne ([v. 4](#))
- C. From the Throne ([v. 5](#))
- D. Before the Throne ([v. 6a](#))

### III. Action in Heaven ([REVELATION 4:6b, 8-11](#))

- A. Living Creatures Worship ([vv. 6b, 8, 9](#))
- B. Elders Worship ([vv. 10, 11](#))  
*Worthy of All Praise*

### Conclusion

- A. Qualities of God
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Thrones

The Royal Throne of Nepal is behind glass in the palace in Katmandu, for the palace is now a museum. The royal family of Nepal was massacred in 2001 and replaced by a constitutional government. The throne remains a symbol of the monarchy’s once-revered status. Some see a risk in its preservation, for any restoration-of-monarchy movement in Nepal would likely want to use this throne for seating a new king. Thus it may be considered both a national treasure and a threat to democracy at the same time.

Today’s lesson pictures Heaven in terms of a royal throne room. The one seated on the throne is the king of Heaven and earth. The ones allowed access into the throne room have a certain derivative honor based on their proximity. John’s vision of this scene is overwhelming for him—almost indescribable. Yet he does his best to explain what he sees, and we are thereby rewarded when we consider his words.

### B. Lesson Background

Many theories exist as to how Revelation should be interpreted. Some believe it is prophetic of future events, primarily those of the end times. Others think it presents a panorama of church history. Some believe Revelation is symbolically speaking of people and events from the first century, mainly those linked with the Roman Empire. Still others think that Revelation is entirely symbolic, a story that portrays the timeless struggle of good versus evil.

Whatever one’s view, there are some important details about Revelation that should be kept in mind while studying the book. One concerns the historical setting of the book. The apostle John was exiled on the barren island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea because of his unwavering loyalty to Jesus ([Revelation 1:9](#)). Patmos was situated about 50 miles southwest of Ephesus, off the coast of modern Turkey. Ephesus was likely the city from which John was exiled. The church at Ephesus is the first of the seven churches addressed by Jesus in [Revelation 1:11; 2:1-3:22](#).

The most probable time of writing is AD 90- 96. It is remarkable that this elderly man was seen as such a threat to the Roman Empire that he would be

banished in his 80s or 90s! He must have been a tireless and effective preacher.

In addition, we should remember that the book of Revelation is narrative, a story told by a narrator. This does not mean it is a fictional story. Much factual history is written in narrative style. John tells what he experiences: marvelous divine visions given to him in exile by Christ. The best way to read Revelation, then, is as a story with various scenes in which the content is connected. The primary overall message of the book is that despite how intense the opposition to God's people may be, in the end they triumph and evil is vanquished for eternity.

As today's lesson begins, John has already stated that "on the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit" ([Revelation 1:10](#)). He then experienced a marvelous vision of "someone like a son of man" ([1:12-16](#)) just before receiving Jesus' messages to the seven churches in [chapters 2 and 3](#). [Chapter 4](#) opens up a new dimension of John's experiences.

## I. Vision of Heaven

([REVELATION 4:1, 2](#))

### A. Open Door (v. 1)

**<sup>1</sup> After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."**

The Scriptures describe *heaven* as a place located above the earth, behind a covering described as the "vault" ([Genesis 1:7, 17](#); [Ezekiel 1:26](#)). This covering blocks any direct view of Heaven, so access requires Heaven to be *open* (as in [Luke 3:21](#)). In John's vision, he is looking up into the sky; and he sees what appears to be an open *door*, an entry into Heaven itself.

## HOW TO SAY IT

Aegean Ih-jee-un.

Kebar Kee-bar.

Ephesus Ef-uh-sus.

Ezekiel Ee-zeek-ee-ul or Ee-zeek-yul.

ex nihilo (*Latin*) eks *nee*-huh-low.

omnipotence ahm-ni-puh-tents.

omniscience ahm-ni-shuntz.

Patmos Pat-muss.

This glimpse is marvelous all by itself, but John's account does not end there. John hears a *trumpet*-like voice inviting him to *come up here*. This is identified as *the voice I had first heard*, therefore that of the risen Christ who previously spoke in a trumpet-like voice and then gave John the messages for the seven churches of Asia ([Revelation 1:10, 11](#)). The voice beckons John to join the speaker in Heaven. The speaker promises to reveal *what must take place after this*, events that have yet to happen.

### B. Majestic Throne (v. 2)

**<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.**

*In the Spirit* as in [Revelation 1:10](#), John's vision places him *in heaven* itself, and the first thing he sees is *a throne*. This probably means he is in a large room, for this would be the normal location of a throne.

Most people today don't think of thrones as possessing much significance. They are in museums, appearing to be little more than ornate and impractical chairs, inferior to our comfortable recliners. But in Bible times, thrones were more than expensive chairs for kings. Palaces had elaborate throne rooms that served as audience halls. The king would enter with pomp and ceremony (compare [Acts 25:23](#)). The throne was the king's seat of authority, recognized as such by all.

The word *throne* could serve as a metaphor for the one who was authorized to sit on it ([Genesis 41:40](#)). Judgments issued from the throne were absolute. The throne was synonymous with royal power, and such is the case here.

The throne John sees is occupied, indicating that the royal court of Heaven is in session; and the King has taken his seat. Something dramatic is about to happen, and we can imagine the anticipation John feels at his opportunity to witness it.

#### *What Do You Think?*

What further steps can we take to conduct ourselves in light of the fact that God is King?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

Regarding ways that others can see

Regarding ways that others cannot see

## II. Arrangement of Heaven

([REVELATION 4:3-6A](#))

### A. On the Throne (v. 3)

**<sup>3a</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby.**

We are to understand that the one on the throne is God, the King of Heaven. John can offer only comparisons to describe the scene before him. *Jasper* is a red stone that can be polished highly and is prized for its beauty. A *ruby* is also red in appearance. The imagery John uses to capture the radiance of God is that of precious jewels in all their brilliance.

**3b. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.**

As is characteristic of the visions of John, he sees something familiar and different at the same time, something both known and gloriously unknown. The *rainbow that encircled the throne* is not the familiar multicolored kind. Rather, it reminds John of *an emerald* in having a brilliant shade of green. This is like no throne John has ever seen!

### THE CROWN JEWELS

The famed Tower of London protects the crown jewels, the national treasures of the United Kingdom monarchy. The centuries-old collection features the Queen Mother's Crown, glistening with 2,800 diamonds. The dazzling display in the Jewel House is adorned with an impressive array of emeralds, rubies, and sapphires for the royal regalia, still in use today by Her Majesty for notable national ceremonies.

Assuredly these crown jewels rank as one of the world's most spectacular displays of beauty and brilliance. Yet, as John implies, the majesty of the King of kings far outshines any gemstone ever seen. The glorious luster emanating from God and around his throne amazed John. No natural or man-made jewel will ever measure up to the stunning wonder of God and our eternal home.

While we may never see a resplendent storehouse of royal jewels this side of eternity, God reminds us that we are to focus our hearts on the "treasures in heaven" ([Matthew 6:19-21](#)). The true sovereign of all creation commands the attention and adoration of every living being. Jesus Christ is *the* crown jewel of our relationship with God. If we are able now to "worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness" ([1 Chronicles 16:29](#)), think how magnificent worship in Heaven will be!

—B. J. L.

## B. Around the Throne (v. 4)

**4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.**

*Twenty-four* occupied *thrones* now catch John's attention. In the Greek text, the word used for these thrones is the same word used for the throne of God. Since other Greek words for "places to sit" are available for John to use (see [Matthew 21:12](#); [23:2](#)), this can indicate that the occupants have a degree of royalty of their own. They surround the main throne, but are clearly lower in status and less glorious.

Although those who occupy the 24 thrones are wearing *crowns of gold*, they are not called kings or princes. Instead, they are *elders*, a term used for leaders in the church or synagogue. The fact that they are religious rulers rather than political authorities is indicated by their *white* clothes, a sign of faith more than royalty. White robes identify the saved of the church in Heaven ([Revelation 6:11](#); [7:13, 14](#)).

The unexplained number 24 has been the subject of much debate. The book of Revelation often uses numbers in a symbolic way, letting them stand for certain people or objects. Generally speaking, the number 12 represents the people of God. This includes the 12 tribes of 12,000 each ([Revelation 7:5-8](#)) and the various references to 12 found in the description of the New Jerusalem ([21:12, 14, 16, 21](#); [22:2](#)).

The number 24, being double the number 12, may represent the people of God from both the Old and New Testaments. Israel, the covenant people of the Old Testament, was comprised of 12 tribes ([Exodus 24:4](#); compare [Revelation 21:12](#)). The covenant people of the New Testament, Christians, are linked with the 12 apostles ([Luke 6:13](#); compare [Revelation 21:14](#)), who comprise the foundation of the church ([Ephesians 2:20](#)). Jesus himself combines the idea of 12 tribes with 12 apostles in his description of the future ([Matthew 19:28](#); [Luke 22:30](#)).

The 24 elders are not named nor is their function explained. But they do have an unforgettable role a few verses later.

#### What Do You Think?

When a church comes to view itself as people of the King, how should its members conduct themselves, individually and collectively?

#### Talking Points for Your Discussion

- In worship
- In ministry priorities
- In ministry leadership
- Other

## C. From the Throne (v. 5)

**5a. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.**

The *lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder* John experiences find something of a parallel in the occasion when God descended upon Mount Sinai before the Israelites ([Exodus 19:16-19](#)). These details add to the splendor of the throne and the one seated upon it.

**5b. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.**

A more orderly type of lighting is positioned in the area *in front of the throne*. *Seven* is another important number in Revelation, signifying completeness or perfection. For example, the seven churches of Revelation indicate congregations known to John, but also symbolize the entirety of the church on earth.

John helps us with the symbolism here. The reference to *seven spirits* does not require us to understand divisions or multiplicity in the Holy Spirit, but gives the sense of perfection and wholeness (as in [Revelation 1:4](#)). We see evidence and activity of the Holy Spirit on the earth among the people of the church, but in Heaven is the fullness of the Holy Spirit found.

#### What Do You Think?

What steps can we take to identify and eliminate things that work against the activity of the Holy Spirit in the here and now?

#### Talking Points for Your Discussion

In terms of sin against the Spirit ([Matthew 12:31, 32](#))  
 In terms of resistance to the Spirit ([Acts 7:51](#))  
 In terms of what grieves the Spirit ([Ephesians 4:30](#))  
 In terms of what quenches the Spirit (1 [Thessalonians 5:19](#))

#### D. Before the Throne (v. 6a)

**6a. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.**

John's eyes move beyond the seven lamps to what looks like a large body of water. To most readers, this suggests an outdoor venue, but more likely it simply reflects the immensity and grandeur of the heavenly throne room.

This scene can be subdivided into two parts: the *glass* aspect and the *crystal* aspect. Glass is a common material today, but it was a luxury item in John's world. Yet the description of *a sea of glass* is not intended to emphasize the abundance of a costly thing. The emphasis, rather, is on the smooth calmness of the sea. The sea's being *clear as crystal*, for its part, emphasizes purity and transparency ([Ezekiel 1:22](#); compare [Revelation 15:2](#); [21:18](#)).

### III. Action in Heaven

([REVELATION 4:6B, 8-11](#))

#### A. Living Creatures Worship (vv. 6b, 8, 9)

**6b. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.**

John describes *four living creatures*. *Creatures* is a generic description that implies that while they may have human or angelic characteristics, they are not quite humans or angels. This sight is reminiscent of the four creatures seen by Ezekiel in his vision by the Kebar River ([Ezekiel 1:3-5](#); [10:15](#)).

In [Revelation 7:1](#), the number 4 is the symbolic number of the entirety of the earth and its inhabitants. Combining the multitude of the creatures' *eyes* with the number 4 indicates that these creatures are watching the entire earth; nothing is hidden from them. They symbolize the all-knowing nature of the Lord, or his omniscience.

##### What Do You Think?

How would we live differently were we to accept fully the fact of God's omniscience? How do we get there?

##### Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding observable behavior
- Regarding thought processes
- Regarding relationships
- Other

**8a. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,"**

Like the six-winged seraphim of Isaiah's vision ([Isaiah 6:2](#)), the *creatures* here declare God's holiness. But it is not enough to say God is holy; he is *holy, holy, holy* ([6:3](#))—absolutely pure. We cannot emphasize God's holiness too much; there is always more to this than we can imagine.

The title *Almighty* emphasizes God's omnipotence; he is all-powerful. The Greek behind this title occurs 10 times in the New Testament, nine of which are in Revelation. References to God's all-powerful nature are even more frequent in the Old Testament, with different words in the original language translated "Lord God Almighty" (2 [Samuel 5:10](#)), "God Almighty" ([Exodus 6:3](#)), or variations thereof. The Hebrew inscription around the picture of the cross on page 289 is from [Isaiah 6:3](#): "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty."

**8b. "who was, and is, and is to come."**

God is eternal—there is no beginning or end either to his omniscience, his holiness, his omnipotence, or he himself (compare [Revelation 1:4, 8](#)).

**9. Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,**

The fact that the *living creatures* lead in worship indicates they are intelligent, speaking beings. Worship for them consists of the praise words of *glory, honor and thanks*, all directed to the one seated on the throne. Accompanying these words of worship is another expression of the Lord's eternal nature: he *lives for ever and ever*.

#### B. Elders Worship (vv. 10, 11)

**10. the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:**

The action returns to the *twenty-four elders*, who now rise from their thrones and *fall down* in the classic posture of *worship*. This is the first of several times these elders will do so ([Revelation 5:8, 14](#); [7:11](#); [11:16](#); [19:4](#)).

The elders engage in an additional act of reverence as they *lay their crowns* at the foot of the throne. This is one of the most unforgettable scenes in the Bible and should challenge us to lay ourselves in service before the Lord. It also emphasizes a central teaching of Revelation, that worship is for God alone and not for any other being or entity ([Revelation 22:8, 9](#)).

##### What Do You Think?

On a scale from 1 (most important) to 4, how would you rank-order the talking points below for enabling you to cast yourself in service before God? Why?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- Considering the examples others have set
- Considering how you have benefited from the service of others
- Considering how others may benefit from your service
- Considering passion in worship

**<sup>11a.</sup> “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,**

The words of the elders offer a concise lesson on the nature of worship. Worship means “to ascribe worthiness.” The elders acknowledge God’s worthiness by saying that he alone should receive humanity’s expressions of *glory and honor and power*. The reason for this comes next.

**<sup>11b.</sup> “for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”**

The elders offer a rationale for this expression of worship: the identity of God as Creator of *all things*. We rightly praise God as Redeemer, but we should not forget that before he was Redeemer, he was Creator. The contenders for power, whether the Roman emperors of John’s day or the dreadful beasts who come later in Revelation, have no power to create *ex nihilo* (“from nothing”) as God does. When we begin to grasp the omniscience, the holiness, the eternity, and the omnipotence of the Lord, worship is the only reasonable response.

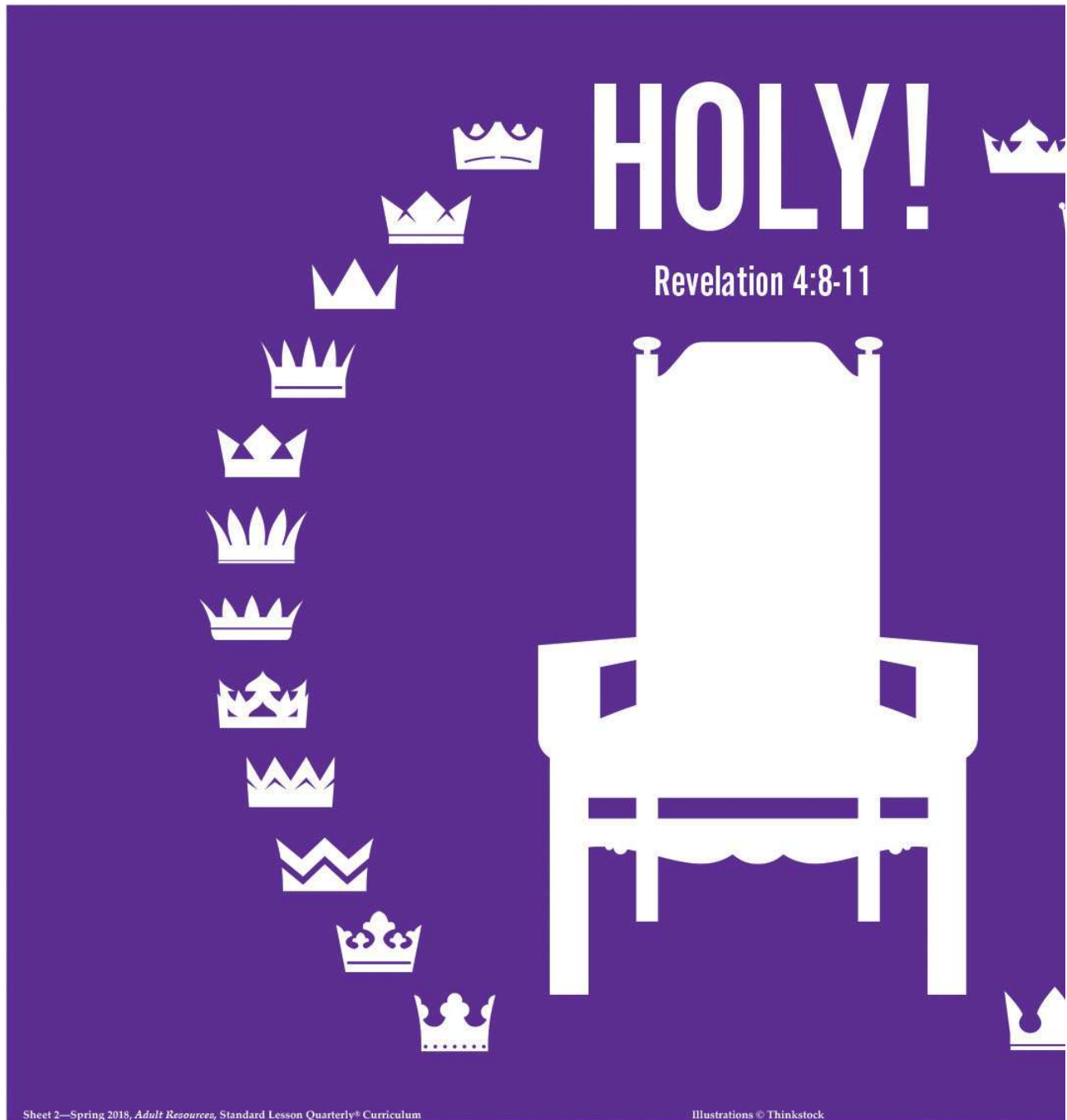
***WORTHY OF ALL PRAISE***

California’s Silicon Valley is the mecca of the world’s technology giants. It’s where science fiction meets science fact. The result is the next generation of mind-stretching innovations. Start-ups press to be the investment of venture capitalists, while the established powerhouses jockey to stay ahead of the wannabes.

Yet Silicon Valley’s stellar lineup does not hold a solar-powered candle to Heaven and the everlasting Creator, who is worthy of all glory, honor, and power. As much as we honor inventors and innovators, the Lord God Almighty is the impetus behind human creativity.

As we marvel at human discoveries and inventions, we must keep a clear view of the originator of everything. Scripture tells us that our Creator designed the seas, land, birds, animals, and humans for his pleasure and his glory ([Colossians 1:16](#)). God’s imagination and ingenuity far surpass any blueprint by human engineers and developers. To our holy “Lord God Almighty” ([Revelation 4:8](#)) be the highest recognition, respect, and reverence.

—B. J. L.



Visual for Lesson 8. As you discuss [Revelation 4:8](#), ask, “What consequences are there for not grasping the profound nature of God’s holiness?”

## Conclusion

### A. Qualities of God

The Bible consistently teaches qualities of God that highlight the immeasurable distance between him and human beings. God is all-knowing (omniscient), for nothing is hidden from him ([Jeremiah 23:24](#)). God is eternal, living and reigning forever ([Psalm 146:10](#)). God is holy, unstained by any unrighteousness or blemish of sin ([Habakkuk 1:13](#)). God is the Almighty (omnipotent), the all-powerful one, far above any human authority or spiritual power ([1 Timothy 6:15, 16](#)).

Revelation has much to teach us about worship and about the nature of God. In our desire to understand the prophetic message of the book, we sometimes miss these additional insights. The more we know about God, the more we are compelled to worship him and the more genuine our worship becomes. Let us worship God in his holiness, his power, his eternity, and his knowledge. Let us worship the Lord God Almighty.

## B. Prayer

Lord God Almighty, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. May you reign forever in all creation and in our hearts. In the name of Jesus, by whom all things are created, we pray. Amen.

## C. Thought to Remember

Almighty God alone is worthy of worship.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Choose a funny topic about which students can make their own “Top 5 List” (examples: birthday gifts for Bigfoot, veggie ice cream flavors, reasons to bathe, names for Chihuahuas). Give each person a sheet of paper and a pen. Have students write up a list, with 5 being the lowest-ranked item and 1 being the highest. Allow one minute, then let volunteers read aloud their lists. (If you have a large number of volunteers, have students read only their top one or two.)

If outlandish topics seem like too much for your group, you can opt to have students make more traditional lists (TV shows, musical groups, etc.).

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Once the Best” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Make this a whole-class activity in which members choose an answer by a show of hands.

After either activity, move into the Bible study by saying, “We all have seen lists of best restaurants, movies, books, etc. But how long does something remain number one? The Bible tells us about the one who is truly the best of the best!”

## Into the Word

Have students work together to create a drawing based on [Revelation 4](#). Before class, hang or lay out a large sheet of mural paper and have markers available. If you are unable to provide mural paper, bring sheets of white paper and let students make individual drawings.

Read aloud [Revelation 4:1-6, 8-11](#)—pausing often to allow students to draw the images described (throne, rainbow, crowns, lightning, etc.). Be supportive and encouraging, as most people aren’t natural artists, and some things described are like nothing they’ve ever seen. After drawings are complete, thank students, and read [verse 11](#) again.

Ask students to give examples of people who received something they didn’t earn (examples: someone awarded an honorary doctorate degree, a lottery winner). Discuss why some people may resent such a recipient and/or the gifts or honors received. Counter that discussion by talking about people who have worked very hard to be where they are today. Ask, “Why do we respect the latter more?” Connect the discussion with the lesson text by comparing and contrasting the respect we have for hard workers with the praise and glory we give to God. Some questions you can pose are (1) “What types of words do we use to praise him? (2) “Why is he worthy of worship?”

*Option.* Sing or play a hymn or song about God’s holiness (such as “I Bowed on My Knees and Cried Holy,” “Holy, Holy, Holy,” or “Holy Is the Lord God Almighty”). Pay special attention to the lyrics and the reasons why God is being glorified.

*Alternative.* Distribute pens and copies of the “In Other Words” activity on the reproducible page. Have students work individually to match the correct words from [Revelation 4](#) with their definitions. Call time in one minute.

After either activity say, “People often wonder to whom they should give ultimate allegiance. Who deserves to be worshipped and praised? Revelation teaches that God alone is worthy of all praise, wonder, and awe.”

## Into Life

Read aloud [Exodus 20:3](#). Distribute wooden craft sticks and pens. Remind students that in Bible times people built altars to worship their gods. On each craft stick, have students write something that they are tempted to put before God. Discuss why each “something” is, in essence, a false god. Have students stack the sticks to make an altar of sorts, then challenge students to plan to remove them from their lives. Talk about practical steps to make that happen.