

Surrounding the Throne

Scripture Reading — Revelation 4:4-8

Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones. . . . In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures. . . . — Revelation 4:4,6

We meet interesting and intriguing characters close to the Lord God and encircling his throne. We might wonder, “Do these elders and creatures help us understand what living in heaven will be like?” It turns out they do more than that; they also show us how to live in God’s kingdom today.

The twenty-four elders, seated on thrones around God’s throne, have long been understood to represent God’s people. Twelve of them represent the people of God in the Old Testament: the twelve tribes of Israel. The other twelve elders represent the church formed under the shepherding care of Jesus’ twelve apostles. The presence of the elders shows that God has given his people a special place in his kingdom; we will rule and reign with God.

Along with the twenty-four elders, we also meet “four living creatures.” They too encircle God and his throne. The living creatures represent “everything that has breath” (Psalm 150:6; see Genesis 2:7) in God’s whole creation. Wild animals, domesticated animals, human beings, and all other creatures have a place of honor and service in God’s throne room.

God’s redemptive care covers his entire creation. As the people who will one day rule and reign with God, God calls us to exercise dominion by loving and caring for all he has made.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for loving and redeeming your whole creation. You love everything you have made. Help us to mirror your care for your entire creation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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