Bible Exegesis

10/24/2015

Section I
Language of the Text
First Required Response

As you read Revelation, you notice that the word “crown” occurs repeatedly. However, a closer examination reveals that the author of Revelation uses two different Greek words for crown: στέφανος and διαδήμα.

Discuss the possible meanings of these two words, and what their different usages denote within Revelation. Determine which of these words is used in Revelation 4:1-11, and discuss what this may signify about the crowns and those who wear them in this passage of scripture. Limit your response to 600 words.

Answer

One reoccurring image in the NT book of Revelation is that of the crown. Throughout John’s Apocalypse, numerous characters are depicted wearing crowns in a variety of different contexts. Yet not all crowns are created equal, as John uses two different words for “crown” in the book. Upon further analysis, we can see the theological and cultural claim that stands behind John's usage of these two words.

One word that John uses to depict a crown is διαδήμα. This word appears three times in Revelation (12:3; 13:1; 19:12) and refers to a royal crown or “diadem” (see NRSV translation). This particular type of crown denotes the wearer’s sovereignty and authority. Each appearance of this word in Revelation is accompanied by a different wearer. In 12:3, the “great red dragon” (δράκων μέγας πυρός) – later identified as Satan (12:9) – is seen with seven diadems on its seven heads. In 13:1, the ‘beast rising from the sea’ (ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἄναβαινον) also bears this particular crown, this time wearing ten on each of its ten horns. In John’s vision, the dragon and the beast are blasphemous creatures who position themselves as the ultimate sovereigns.

While the dragon and the beast claim to have the last word, they are both superseded by the final character to wear the diadem. In chapter 19, Jesus Christ returns triumphantly with his heavenly hosts. Unlike the dragon’s seven crowns and the beast’s ten crowns, Jesus returns wearing “many diadems” (vs. 12, διαδήματα πολλά). That John uses the word πολλά - which signifies a great amount – instead of a finite number underscores the claim that the sovereignty of Christ is infinitely
greater than that of the satanic forces. The dragon and the beast are false rulers, while Jesus Christ is the true "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (vs. 16).

The second word for "crown" is the one we find in our current passage: στέφανος. This word appears twice in chapter four (4:4, 4:10) and refers to the "golden crowns" (στεφάνους χρυσοὺς) that are worn by the "twenty four elders" (τεσσαρακοστῶν πρεσβυτέρων) who sit on the thrones that surround God’s throne. The word appears elsewhere in Revelation (2:10; 3:11; 6:2; 9:7; 12:1; 14:14) and in other NT writings (e.g. 2 Ti. 4:8; Js. 1:12; 1 Pt. 5:4), in which it is a prize conferred to believers who have persevered. The image being invoked is one of a victorious athlete or warrior who is awarded with a wreath – the symbol of victory. Throughout the NT, the word is closely associated with the saints, particularly in relation to martyrs. Therefore, unlike the διάδημα of the beast and the dragon, the στέφανος of the elders does not represent a challenge to God’s authority, but is rather the mark of the communion of saints – the royal priesthood of God (1:6).

What is most significant about these crowns is that they are cast down before the divine throne. In worship and adoration, the elders “lay down their crowns before the throne” (4:10), for God alone is worthy. In this act, the elders confess that the victory they possess is not their own but comes from God. Through this, we that Christian worship is the joyful acknowledgement and celebration of the truth that all glory, honor, and victory properly belongs to the Creator God. The elders, who collectively represent redeemed humanity (Beale, 332), show us that this celebration is at the heart of our identity in Christ.

**Reader Responses**

The response gives a good discussion on the two different meanings for the word crown. The response clearly identifies the significance of John’s use of stephanos in Rev. 4:1-11 and the implications that it makes regarding the text. The response could have been strengthened by including how in Revelation, the diadem symbolized royalty of the Roman imperial power. From there, the response could have built on the connection that it is God who is sovereign over the imperial cult.

This response is clear, articulate and thoroughly addresses each part of the prompt. The response was strengthened further by the application of this information to Christian worship, and "our identity in Christ."

**Section I**

**Historical Situation**

Second Required Response

In Revelation 4:11, you note the following acclamation spoken by the twenty-four elders:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,

to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,

and by your will they existed and were created.” (New Revised Standard Version)

Given the context of the imperial cult, discuss the implications of this acclamation for the Christian community. Explain how this influences your interpretation of Revelation 4:1-11. Limit your response to 600 words.

**Answer**

On the surface, the elders' praise in Revelation 4:11 is a majestic veneration of the Creator God. When read in the light of its original context, one finds that the scene is also fraught with allusions to the first century, Roman imperial cult. These parallels function as a political challenge to the powers of the ancient Roman Empire, as well as to all political claims to sovereignty throughout history.

Important to the interpretation of this chapter is its setting in a throne room. While the throne invokes the memory of the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem (Baker, 124), it also calls to mind a universal symbol of sovereignty (Beale, 320). In the time of John's writing, the throne of the empire – the throne of Caesar – resided in Rome. Yet, here the greatest throne in the universe – the throne of the Creator God – exists in heaven (Murphey, 178).

The liturgy in Revelation 4 also contains parallels to the forms of reverence rendered unto the emperor in the imperial cult. The elders προσκυνέω, or “prostrate” themselves before God (vs. 10, the NRSV appropriately translates this as “worship”). The word προσκυνέω was important in ancient politics, as rulers often expected prostration or worship from their subjects (Murphey, 187). Also, the act of the elders laying down their crowns before God’s throne is an intentional allusion to the practice of vassals laying down their crowns before the emperor in the imperial court. As an act of submission, they would cast their crowns at the feet of Caesar and leave them there until Caesar allowed his vassals to retrieve them (Ibid.). In contrast, the elders cast their crowns at the feet of God and do not presume to pick them up again.

Finally, and most significantly, the acclamation of the twenty four in vs. 11 provides a strong challenge to the emperor's hegemony. The form of this hymn is a doxology, a standard declaration of praise and loyalty expected by the Roman emperor (Murphey, 186). A common word that appears in such doxologies is δέος, or “worthy”. Here, it is not the emperor, but God who is worthy. Also significant is the addition of “our Lord and God” (ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ Θεός), which mirrors the preferred title of Domitian, the reigning emperor of John’s day (Ibid.). God’s worthiness derives from God’s creation of “all things” (τὰ πάντα), which includes Caesar himself. Indeed, it is by God’s will that these things continue to exist, a claim which Caesar cannot boast.

The polemic against the imperial cult inherent to the praise of God in Revelation 4 is vital for understanding a central claim of John’s Revelation: the Triune God is sovereign, not the political or demonic powers that be (see discussion of crowns). The powers of the world can only kill, while God, the true Lord of the universe can create, sustain, and raise his creation from the dead. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is infinitely more valuable than the kingdoms of the world. The Church, the community that lives under the reign of God, pledges its sole allegiance to God in Christ. It does so in the faith that the way of the world (i.e. the way of oppression, violence, and the sword) is trumped by the way of Christ (i.e. the way of love, peace, and the cross). No oppressive government, human sin, natural disaster, or tragic illness is worthy enough to have the last word.
The Creator God is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords... and that is cause for faithfulness and celebration.

Reader Responses

The response is a thorough and detailed analysis of the historical situation and context. The response is an excellent discussion of how John speaks directly against the Roman imperial cult within the text.

This is a clear response which addresses the questions raised in the prompt. Of particular strength is the usage of the Greek text in the discussion; this demonstrates the textual work done in preparing this answer in addition to the historical research. This response is also strengthened by the theological and pastoral application of the exegetical work found in the final paragraph.

Section I

Scriptural and Theological Context

Third Required Response

As you review “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!” you notice that, in verse two, poet Reginald Heber includes these words:

“cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,

who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.”

Your research reveals that neither the words “cherubim” nor “seraphim” appear in the Revelation to John. Explain how Heber’s poetic choice points to links between the language of the Old Testament and Revelation. Determine at least two (2) possible sources from the Old Testament that the author of Revelation may have used in the writing of this chapter. Explain how your responses influence your interpretation of Revelation 4:1-11. Limit your response to 600 words.

Answer

The hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!” imagines the “cherubim” and “seraphim” participating in the worship of God in the divine throne room. The direct source text for the hymn, Revelation 4, contains no explicit reference to these biblical creatures. However, Reginald Heber’s inclusion is an entirely faithful one when we consider the connections between John’s vision and moments in the OT.
John’s depiction of heavenly worship contains heavy allusions to three similar scenes in the OT. The first can be found in Isaiah’s call story in Isaiah 6. In it, he sees a vision of the Yahweh’s throne in the Holy of Holies (vs. 1). Around the throne are the seraphim, angelic creatures who are constantly worshipping the Lord (vs. 2). Like the living creatures in Revelation 4, these seraphim have six wings, four of which are necessary to shield their eyes and feet. And like the creatures in Revelation, the seraphim worship God, crying out, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (vs. 3).

Another OT passage that influenced Revelation can be found in Ezekiel 1. In yet another call story, Ezekiel stands by the river Chebar and sees a vision of God (vs. 1). In the vision, Ezekiel sees four “living creatures” (vs. 5) that are later explicitly named as “the cherubim” (10:20). The number and descriptions of these creatures are similar those of their counterparts in Revelation. Though each of Ezekiel’s cherubim each have four faces to John’s one each (Beale, 330), they are the faces of the same creatures: the lion, the ox, the eagle, and a human (vs. 10). Also in Ezekiel’s vision are wheels with eyes on the rims (vs. 18). John incorporates these accompanying “eye wheels” by making them a characteristic of his creatures themselves (Beale, 331). Thus, just as with the seraphim in Isaiah, John’s creatures are heavily intertextual references to the cherubim of the OT.

One final OT influence for John’s vision is Daniel 7. Like John’s, Daniel’s vision is of a great throne room with multiple thrones. The Ancient of Days occupies the great throne, the description of which includes wheels like those found in Ezekiel, as well as terrifying natural phenomena (fire in Dan. 7:9; c.f. lightning in Rev. 4:5). In neither Daniel nor Revelation God is named (Murphy, 178), but in both another figure comes to claim power equal to God (the son of man in Daniel, and the Lamb in Revelation 5). Present in both throne rooms are the angelic creatures. Again, John pulls heavily from the OT narrative in order to establish that what he is seeing is the heavenly throne room of God (Baker, 124). This throne room necessarily includes the attendance of God’s heavenly hosts.

The connection between the four creatures, the cherubim and seraphim, and their praise of God carries with it two implications. First, the Lord is praised on account of his awesome holiness and sovereignty (Beale, 332). That this is the same God who “was, is and is to come” means that he reigns now and that his holiness shall one day cover the entire world. Second, not only is John invoking these parallels in order to establish continuity between Yahweh and the God of his vision, but he uses them to join the praise of the angels with that of all creation – especially and including the Church (ibid.). In Revelation 4, the worshipping Church participates in the refrain of the cherubim and seraphim. In our worship, we confess that this Holy God is the true King of the cosmos in the faith that the whole world will be (and is being) evidently consumed by God’s holiness (Rev. 22:3; c.f. Hab. 2:14).

Reader Responses

The response adequately discusses the OT references and connections of cherubim and seraphim from the hymn to the Revelation text.

This is a well organized response and thoroughly explores each potential Old Testament source text and how they might influence the interpretation of Revelation 4:1-11. The response could have been strengthened by a study/comparison of genre in these texts.
Section I

Scriptural and Theological Context

Fourth Required Response

As you prepare to preach about Revelation 4:1-11 on Trinity Sunday, you come across the following statement in *Faith Seeking Understanding* (3rd edition), by Reformed theologian Daniel L. Migliore:

The power of the triune God is not coercive but creative, sacrificial and empowering love; and the glory of the triune God consists not of dominating others but in sharing life with others. (Migliore, 75)

Compare this theological assertion with the depiction of God in Revelation 4:1-11, and in at least one (1) other place in Revelation. Describe the extent to which the depiction of God in Revelation is consonant with or dissonant from Migliore’s assertion. Explain how your findings affect your interpretation of Revelation 4:1-11. *Limit your response to 600 words.*

Answer

Perhaps the greatest motif in the book of Revelation is the opposition between the sovereignty of God and the supposed authorities of the world. John’s adamant claim is that the power of God trumps the power of the world. However, Revelation does not take this to mean that God is just a more powerful version of the worldly rulers. Rather, the book reimagines power according to the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. This reinterpretation of power can clearly be seen in three places.

In the vision of God’s throne room in Revelation 4, the twenty four elders sing, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...” (vs. 11a). Why is God worthy? According to the rest of the hymn, God is worthy on account of God’s work of creation (Baker, 126). It reads, “for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created (vs. 11b).” The conjunction ὅτι (translated “for” in the NRSV) is significant because it connects the two clauses. The Lord’s power is manifest in creative activity. This runs counter to worldly understandings of power, of which domination and violence are part and parcel. Caesar exercises his power by taking life away. God exercises power by giving life to others. Thus, Daniel Migliore’s assertion that God’s power is inherently creative rings true (Migliore, 75).

Another place in which our conceptions of power are flipped upside down is in Revelation 19. Here Jesus returns and defeats the forces of evil. Many interpreters have read this as Jesus condescending to the use of worldly (violent and coercive) force. However, a closer look reveals that, in fact, the opposite is true. In verse 13, Jesus’ clothes are described as being “dipped in blood.” Yet, his clothes are bloody before the battle even begins in verse 19. The blood on Jesus’ clothes is *his own blood* due to his atoning sacrifice (Harrington, 192).
Later in the same passage, Revelation tells us that Jesus slays the armies of the beast (vs. 21). This is described as a very bloody affair, brought about by Jesus’ sword. What is important to note is that Jesus’ sword comes out of His mouth (vs. 15; notice John’s repetition of this fact in vs. 21). That which slays evil is not a literal weapon, but rather the prophetic word of truth. Furthermore, the beast and the false prophet are defeated without a single blow. The “army” of heaven does not engage in the battle. The “battle” isn’t much of a battle at all. Rather it is the word of the slain Lamb that defeats evil (Harrington, 192-195). Here and throughout Revelation, John brilliantly uses violent imagery to subvert violence itself. God’s does not exercise his power though the use of violence, but rather with self-sacrificial love and truth (Migliore, 75).

Finally, at the end of the book, we see the purpose of God’s creative and self-sacrificial love. In Revelation 21, the world has been put to rights and the heavenly city comes down from heaven. As the city descends, a loud voice says,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them…” (vs. 3).

God’s endgame is to be in relationship with humanity. Not just the one people of Israel as in the quoted scripture, but with his peoples (Harrington, 209-210). The next chapter puts this more bluntly, saying that we will one day, “see his face” (22: 4). The purpose of God’s redemptive power is that all of humanity might share life with God (Migliore, 75). Therefore, I affirm Migliore’s assertion as biblically sound.

**Reader Responses**

The response demonstrates a thoughtful examination of the Migliore quote with the text. The response provides good examples to support its argument. The response could have been strengthened by examining further Migliore’s reference to the Triune God in relationship to the text given the ministry context.

This response clearly compares Migliore’s description of God to those found in Revelation 4:1-11 and other places in Revelation. However, this response fails to explain how this influences the interpretation of Revelation 4:1-11. A stronger response would have included this element of the prompt question and might have considered how this work would influence the preaching of this text.

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**Section II**

**Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. **Focus Statement:**

Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I). The statement must articulate a theme from the assigned
bibalical passage that you will develop as a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*

**Answer**

In Revelation 4:1-11, we see that all of creation celebrates the truth that the Holy, Loving, Self-giving, Creator God is the sovereign Lord of the universe, and therefore, all other forces which claim ultimate authority - including Caesar, Satan, evil, death, and even ourselves - have been defeated and dethroned.

**Reader Responses**

The focus statement is solid and well-thought out. The focus statement ties in well with the interpretation in this section. The focus statement could be strengthened by being more concise (though statement is within word limit).

This is a focused statement summarizing the content of the Faithful Interpretation essay to follow.

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**Section II**

**Presenting a Faithful Interpretation (cont.)**

2. **Supporting the Interpretation:**

Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Answer**

The Book of Revelation tells a majestic, strange, and awe-inspiring story. Perhaps the most important motif of this story is the question, “To whom belongs ultimate power and authority?” This question permeates the entirety of John’s vision, and its answer – the God revealed in Jesus Christ – compels the joyful adoration of all creation. It is this celebration that explodes to the surface in the scene of heavenly worship in Revelation 4:1-11.

The issue of sovereignty is of prime importance to John’s Apocalypse. In the vision, wars are fought (e.g. 12:7-17), the word for “throne” (thrónos) appears 44 times, and various crowned beings arise to claim dominion over the world (12:3; 13:2; 19:12). All throughout, the book is very much concerned with determining the rightful ruler among many contenders. This concern arose from the historical context of the visionary, John. At the time of his writing, the church was facing heavy
persecution under the Roman Empire (Harrington, 12). John, having himself been exiled to the island of Patmos, relayed his vision to several churches as an encouragement during their tribulation. In the first chapter, he claims to share in “the persecution and the kingdom” (1:9). Here, John establishes the reoccurring tension between presumed sovereignty (Rome who persecutes) and true sovereignty (“the kingdom”) – between the kingdoms of the world and the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 4 addresses the issue of sovereignty in manifold ways. Upon finishing his direct address to specific churches, John begins the account of his main vision. He sees a door open in heaven and is taken up in the Spirit (vs. 1-2a). The description of heaven matches that of both a religious temple and an imperial law court. The “sea of glass” (vs. 6a) recalls various OT images of God’s heavenly temple (Baker, 259-261). Four strange creatures resembling the cherubim and seraphim in the OT are present here as well (4:6b-8; c.f. Isa. 6, Eze. 1, and Dan. 7), thus establishing that John is witnessing the divine council of Yahweh (Baker, 124). The twenty-four elders engage in the priestly worship of God (Beale, 322), yet the fact that they have thrones and crowns invokes imagery of vassals attending the emperor’s law court (Murphey, 187). The collective thrust of this imagery communicates that the proceedings of this divine temple/council have implications for the entire world.

It is in this heavenly temple-court that John sees a “throne” with “one seated upon the throne” (4:2a, ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθίσματος). Contrary to the throne of the empire, the true throne of the cosmos resides in heaven (Harrington, 79). It is not Caesar that occupies this throne, but “the Lord God Almighty” (vs. 8). Thus, in opposition to Caesar’s claim to power stands the sovereign King of the universe. This polemic lies beneath the worship that ensues in the rest of the chapter. The doxological praise that was preferred by the Caesar of John’s time (Domitian) is given to God instead (vs. 11). The elders προσκυνήσαντες (lit. “prostrate themselves,” vs. 10) before God, which is the precise word used to describe the reverence paid to Caesar (Murphy, 187). Over and over again, John suggests that the praise of creation is also a polemic against the powers of the world.

The affirmation of the sovereignty of God over and against the kingdoms of the world is a source of joy and comfort for the people of God, who are being persecuted at the hands of the empire. This is not lost on John, as the cries of the martyrs feature heavily in his vision (e.g. 6:9-11; 13:7; 20:4). Indeed, this is alluded to in the “crowning” of the elders in Chapter 4. The word στέφανος – translated as “crown” in the NRSV – refers to a particular wreath that was given to victorious athletes (Murphy, 125). This word appears often in Revelation (e.g. 2:10; 3:11; 12:1; 14:14) and elsewhere in the NT (e.g. 2 Ti. 4:8; Js. 1:12; 1 Pt. 5:4) as a reward to the saints who have persevered. This is the same word used to describe Jesus’ “crown of thorns” (στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν in Mat. 27:29) and is the name of Stephen, the first martyr (Acts 7:59). Therefore, the elders, who represent redeemed humanity, worship God as overcomers. In life, death, and persecution, they acknowledge the Holy God as the true King. Furthermore, in casting their crowns before the throne of God, they confess that their even their victory is owed to God. The Church, even while persecuted, is victorious because its God is victorious.

To say that God is victorious is not to say that God is the best player of the world’s game. Rather, God plays a totally different game. The Trisagion (Τρισάγιον, not in the text but literally means “three times Holy”) expresses that God’s character is wholly opposed to the forces that terrorize creation. How God exercises power looks radically different from how the evil figures in Revelation (e.g. the great dragon, the beast, the whore of Babylon) exercise theirs. While evil uses death to assert its power, God is “worthy to receive glory, honor, and power for (δι’ – ‘because’) God is Creator (vs. 11). God’s power is seen in the act of giving and sustaining life, not taking it away. Also, while the kingdoms of the world understand power in terms of violence, oppression, and the ability to degrade life, in the Kingdom of God, power is understood in terms of peace, empowerment, and the growth of all life (Migliore, 75).
Most significantly, the prime executor of God's sovereign work in the book of Revelation is the slain Lamb, Jesus Christ. In the following chapter, we see that it is the Lamb who is worthy enough to take the scroll from God's right hand (5:6-7). Yet, it is precisely this Lamb who is worthy, because (again, ὅτι) he is slaughtered for the sake of the world (vs. 9-10). And it is this sacrifice that characterizes His victory. The Word of God who wears "many diadems" — versus the finite diadems of Satan (12:3) and the beast (13:1) — is also the one whose cloak is "dipped" (βεβαίωθη, lit. "baptized") — in his own blood (19:12-13). Furthermore, the word βεβαίωθη is in the perfect tense, which means that this "dipping" has ramifications for the present time. Both in John's day and today, it is in the self-sacrificial, redemptive love of Christ that God's power is perfectly revealed.

Ultimately, what we see in Revelation 4 is a joyful celebration of who God is. It's a celebration that God, not Caesar, is on the throne. It's a celebration that Satan does not have the last word. It's a celebration that the current world order that oppresses creation has been turned upside-down. It's a celebration that we (weak and capricious creatures) are not in control. It's a celebration that God looks like the slain Lamb, Jesus Christ. And it's a celebration that this Awesome, Holy, and Loving God has invited us into eternal fellowship with him (21:3). Upon seeing the beauty of the blessed Trinity, "All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea" (GTG, #1).

Reader Responses

This is an excellent faithful interpretation of the text. It is thorough and adheres closely to the focus statement given. The response shows use of good exegetical research and individual interpretation of the text.

This response reflects a reasonable interpretation of this text. Its argument is well supported with the biblical text as well as by research. This response demonstrates an understanding of biblical interpretation and exegesis.

Section III

Application

Provide an outline, or a summary description of the major themes, for your sermon that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. Limit your work to 600 words.

Answer

This sermon will kick off our church's season of celebration by listening for the Word of God through Revelation 4:1-11, which is the source text for our focus hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." In the scripture text, we see a joyful celebration of God's reign that we hope will characterize our own season of celebration. However, it is important to know why we are celebrating the fact that God is King. In my sermon, I will proclaim that the reason for our celebration comes
from a recognition of who God is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is because of who God is that we celebrate God’s victory – both in word and in deed.

We live in a chaotic world. Recent news headlines have featured numerous acts of senseless and horrific violence. Between forty-five school shootings, multiple incidents of police brutality, and the persistent threat of domestic and foreign terrorism, 2015 has been characterized by an increased sense of fear and insecurity. Though various governmental authorities claim to have the power to bring order to the chaos, they exercise their power through violence, oppression, and punitive justice. This only serves to feed into the demonic cycle of instability. Beyond these societal manifestations of evil, we are all well aware of the chaos in our own lives. We are too familiar with the sound of sirens... with the sudden dread that comes with a bad diagnosis... with unexpected loss – whether it’s of a job, a relationship, or a dream. In the midst of all of this, it is easy to think that the chaos has the last word.

In contrast to the apparent way of the world, Revelation 4:1-11 gives us a glimpse of the truth. On the throne of the universe sits the Lord God Almighty. The elders proclaim Him as the Creator of all that is. The angels praise Him as the one who has, is, and will personally intervene in His creation. Ultimately, He is the one who has revealed Himself as the Lamb slain for the sake of the world. The Lamb shows us that God’s power looks like self-sacrificial, self-giving love. Through the Son, and in the power of the Spirit, we see the beautiful character of this Heavenly Father.

To say that the Lamb-like God sits on the throne is to say that the powers that be do not. Instead of any capricious human authority, it is the covenantally faithful God that reigns in heaven. Instead of violence and oppression, true power looks like dying for the sake of ones enemies. Instead of chaos and death, it is the God of order and life that has the last word. Instead of Satan and every demonic principality and power, it is the God of love, peace, and justice who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We need not fear the forces which claim sovereignty over our lives, because it is the Holy God who sits on the throne! This is why we, with all of creation, cry out in jubilant praise.

We, the people of God’s Kingdom, celebrate by living in accordance with life in the Kingdom. Life in the Kingdom is inherently connected to the character of the King. We forgive because grace is revealed to be truly effective. We make peace because true power lies in way of the cross (not the sword). We love because the power of God is the self-giving love of Jesus Christ. Finally, we celebrate by praising God, trusting that the Lord will one day consummate His victory... a victory that has already been won.

**Reader Responses**

This is a clear sermon application of the text. The application connects to the faithful interpretation and does connect to the part of the ministry text. The application could have been strengthened by including incorporating use of Trinity Sunday. This is an excellent response; however, there was some use of non-inclusive language (see third paragraph). The response could have been strengthened by use of a fuller range of biblical imagery for God.

This sermon response, while coherent and pastoral, would have been strengthened had it attended more to the scriptural text and the exegetical work of the previous section(s). Additionally, while passing mention is made of elements of the required ministry context such as the hymn, it is unclear how this response continues to address this context.
Section III
Works Consulted

In the text box below, please provide a bibliographical listing of all research materials consulted during the preparation of your exam responses.

Answer

Works Cited

Commentaries:


Exegesis Tools:


Reader Responses

This is an adequate use of works consulted.
Overall Evaluation

Final Evaluation and Notes to Presbytery

Please include here your comments in support of the overall evaluation of the examination along with any notes for the presbytery committee/commission overseeing the examinee's preparation for ministry.

Reader Responses

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<th>Comments</th>
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<td>This was a strong and well-thought out exam. The exam showed thorough examination of not only the text given but how it fits within the larger context of Revelation.</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>This exam demonstrates the ability to thoroughly exegete a passage, theologically reflect upon it, and form an argument around the research that has been done. It would have been stronger had the sermon outline attended more to both the exegetical work done and the required ministry context.</td>
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