

Revelation 1:4-8 The Decision of the Court
John 20:19-29
April 27, 2025

Throughout the bible there is an occasional reference to a heavenly courtroom, where God presides with an assorted collection of angels and celestial creatures; seraphs and different kinds of spirits. It seems to be a kind of conversation piece, it function like a literary device, a setting to present the divine decisions and actions.

In the 82nd Psalm it is not so much the details that are described, but the but the functioning of the court:

“God presides in the great assembly;
he renders judgment among the “gods”:

In the Creation account in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, there is an echo of it when God says,

“Let us make man in our image . . .”

Or in the first part of the Book of Job, we find:

“One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.”

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are told that the temple was a copy and a shadow of the true sanctuary in heaven, and that;

“. . . what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human beings.”

We might even consider *this* sanctuary as a replica of sorts, and we ourselves the servants of God gathered. The scene is given a much more detailed description in the narrative of Isaiah’s call in the sixth chapter,”

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.”

The most detailed description of the scene comes from the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse. John the seer, is invited up into the heavens. It is as follows:

“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.” At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

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. 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. 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. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 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.’”

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

Beyond worship, the central topic of conversation is the human beings, what is to be done about them; to create, to test, to teach, to redeem. Certainly this scene, the heavenly courtroom, is a primary feature in the Book of Revelation, from which we have read this morning. What is to be done about the people?

We approach this question, not only as the people to which the question refers, but also as among those who came along in history long after the question has been answered. *What is to be done . . .?* Jesus is to be done. The life and death and resurrection of Jesus is the divine action that stands as the decision of the court, the action of God.

As the decision of the court, it is an all out assault against the things that make for trouble . . . anger and resentment, fear, selfishness and greed; sin and death. The whole Christ event is the divine answer to the question. What is to be done about the people?

One of the great human questions of life is the acceptance of this decision and *faith in it*. The gospel text this morning is the resurrection account with the

infamous, “Doubting Thomas,” who wasn’t present the first time Jesus appeared to the disciples and refused to believe Jesus was alive, for he could not believe what he could not see.

It was only a week later that Jesus appeared to them once more, and this time Thomas *was* there. The scene gives us three famous biblical lines:

“Stop doubting and believe,” and,

“My Lord and my God,” and,

“Blessed are those who have *not* seen, and yet believe.”

It is the Easter season, once again. We hear the news of resurrection, and the message from the heavenly courtroom, from Christ himself who bears witness there, that we have been loved and set free, and that the great victory of life over death has been won, and we are called as kings and priests to serve and give glory to God, and to proclaim that he is,

“the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is, and who was, and who is yet to come, the Almighty.”

No matter the biblical context in which we find this courtroom setting, or any references or allusions to it, or the situation in life from which we hear, there is always a call to faithful living. In good times and in bad we are called to be mindful of God’s forgiving and reconciling love, and to live as if we believe in it, with

goodness and compassion towards other people; for indeed, we *do* believe.

The Christ event is the decision of the court, let us have faith and not doubt. Let us be strong in that faith, and be encouraged, because the decision on our behalf and on behalf of the world has been made, the judgment rendered in the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord . . .

[Back](#)

[Home](#)