

November 22, 2020

Worship at the Throne

Revelation 4:1-11

Over the past few months, wildfires have swept across California. The sky filled with smoke in Los Angeles; fields of grapevines burned in Napa Valley; 90,000 people were told to evacuate around Orange County; and more than 6.2 million acres have burned since the beginning of the year.¹ The growing wildfires touch everyone in the Golden State in some way: through property burned, friends misplaced, smoke filling the air, or simply by creating empathy while watching the evening news. The fires are worsening every year, and they are devastating.

For many, the fires seem an insurmountable hardship. Year after year the same areas are hit hard by fire. Families no sooner rebuild than they are struck by another disaster. However, in times of crisis, Christians have a reliable God to turn to. “God is with us,” said Catholic bishop of San Jose, Bishop Oscar Cantú. “He is our refuge and strength, especially in moments of darkness. His love for us is fiercer than any fire, stronger than any disease, steadier than the unknown.”²

In this week’s lesson, the student book author speaks of the Resurrection and how Christians find hope and joy beyond the suffering of this world by turning their eyes to the glory of God: “Paul made a powerful statement in Romans 8:18: ‘I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that awaits us.’ Paul did not necessarily say that our lives will become better now. . . . Paul put our hope in the ‘coming glory.’ ”³

Fires burn. Bad things happen. But our God is steady and true. Natural disasters strike, but our God is more powerful than any storm. God is with us now as we weather hardships, a refuge that cannot be burnt or blown away. God is with us forever in the coming resurrection and beyond. If you are experiencing hardship this week, lay it at the feet of our steadfast God. “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, because you created all things. It is by your will that they existed and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

1. Have you or someone you know experienced a natural disaster? How did it make you feel?
2. How does the promise of the resurrection affect your faith?
3. Does turning your problems over to God make you feel more or less in control? Why?

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¹From bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54180049 and cnn.com/2020/10/26/us/california-fires-monday/index.html.

²From vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2020-08/california-wildfires-bishop-cantu-calls-for-prayers.html.

³From *Adult Bible Studies*, Fall 2020, by Chuck Aaron (Cokesbury, 2020); page 124.