

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Throne of God

Rev. 4

INTRODUCTION:

Just as we have entered into a new year, the passage of scripture this morning is going to enter mankind into a new age, a new dispensation.

Chapters 4 and 5 serve as an introduction to chapters 6 through 20 that follow. We find ourselves in the throne room of heaven, the Lamb assumes the responsibility of initiating the great final conflict with the forces of evil, the end of which will see the Lamb triumphant and the devil consigned to the lake of fire.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 4 (NASB)

4 After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. ³ And He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

⁵ Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; ⁶ and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. ⁷ The first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

ILLUSTRATION:

I am sure that you can recall where you were and what you were doing on the morning of September 11, 2001 (9-11). I was late arriving to work in Omaha, Nebraska. I had not listened to the news that morning. As I was walking in, I noticed a lot of people walking out of work and many congregated together talking in the lobby and in the halls. There seemed to be a lot of concern and confusion. I worked in the tallest building in Omaha, so they had it evacuated very quickly.

19 evil men, with hearts filled with darkness and hate and their minds dominated by a sense of self-righteousness and vengeance, hijacked 4 airliners and carried out suicide attacks against specially selected targets.

Two of the planes were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center

A third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C.,

And the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania before it reached its destination because of the courage and sacrifice of those on board.

Over 3,000 people were killed during these attacks, including more than 400 police officers and firefighters.

Osama Ben Laden took immediate credit for the attack and Muslims across the Mid-East rejoiced in the crippling of the "Great Satan" (Us).

Our nation needed someone to tell us they understood our fears, our enemy and our future. It needed someone to say they had a plan to deal with our enemy and that together we would overcome. Essentially, that's what Revelation 4 is all about.

That is what we heard from president Bush.

I understand your fear.

I know the enemy and I have a plan to deal with them.

I know what we're going to do to face the coming days and we will overcome this hardship and tragedy together.

That's essentially the message of Revelation 4.

God is saying: I understand your fear. I know the enemy and I have a plan to deal with them. And I know what we're going to do to face the coming days and we will overcome this hardship and tragedy together.

Prayer

BODY:

I. GOD REIGNS.

This passage of scripture is full of symbols. It is important to recognize that the genre is apocalyptic. In order to understand the meaning of the symbols one must look at them from different perspectives.

- Context. Verses before and after.
- Book. How do these symbols work in Revelation?
- Old Testament. How are these symbols used in the Old Testament. There 404 verses in Revelation and over 516 allusions to the Old Testament. John's primary source is the Old Testament.
- New Testament. What is revealed in Jesus' and the apostles teachings?
- Historical Setting. War and worship are connected. Revelation tells us that whoever you worship determines which side of the battle you are fighting for. Worship is from the heart. Are you worshipping God or the world? You declare war against the other side through worship. Your faithfulness to God shows your allegiance.

The key question that is being asked by the first century Christians is who reigns? Rome or God?. Who is supreme? People in the first century were being told that Caesar is reigning. Who is really in control? If it is God, it does not look like He is doing a very good job because they are suffering.

“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 carnelian. A rainbow, resembling 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.”

Notice what’s happening here.

Jesus tells John he’s about to see "what must take place after this..."

We’re all familiar with what’s coming in the following chapters.

There’s horrendous pictures of war, famine, pestilence and death.

Preachers and teachers who make a living telling people about the horrors of Revelation and jump right into describing the dangers and challenges the future holds.

II. THE THRONE ROOM OF WORSHIP.

BUT NOT JESUS!

Jesus doesn’t “jump” into the pictures of the future. Instead, we find ourselves in God’s throne room witnessing an awesome worship service filled with strange sights and sounds...

- lightning and thunder and rumblings in the distance
- beautiful colors
- unusual creatures

- and an inspiring example of how to praise God.

Pause.

When I first began to study this passage I suddenly thought..."What's going on here?"

If Jesus has told John that he's about to see "what must take place after this..." why would the first thing Jesus take John to be a "church service"? Why visit this beautiful BUT seemingly irrelevant ceremony. Why not just get right down to the nitty gritty of it all and tell us all about what we REALLY want to know about:

The conflict between the forces of good and evil, the forces of Satan and the angels of God?

Or, a clear sequence of future events from John's time through especially the events following Christ's second coming. But instead we find ourselves being led into a praise service.

Why start here?

Because that's where God KNEW the first century Christians and us needed to begin.

We need to realize that when we read Revelation – it's possible for us to focus on the wrong things. TV Evangelists and radio preachers get caught up looking at the wrong things all the time.

You'll hear or read many of these guys focus on:

- The Powers of Darkness;
- The Mark of the Beast;
- The Great Tribulation;
- The Battle of Armageddon; and so on.

Revelation would not be a Bible book I would read to children for a bedtime story. There's some frightening images in there! And God knows that!

And that's why the vision starts in the throne room.

Consider the images that this chapter places in our minds

- It's Awesome.
- It's unEarthly – there's odd creatures in this room.
- Yet its somehow comforting (24 elders in white garments & crowns). These elders at least look something like us.
- And God is worshipped by everything in Heaven and on earth. This worship is done in a righteous environment free from sin. Thus the worship is spontaneous and from the heart. NOT because they have to, but because they WANT to.

There is a sense of Wonder and Power here! A Sense of Power here and an assurance that – if this is my God - I can overcome!

The images that follow this, in chapters 5 through 18, can be frightening and overwhelming. But our God is bigger than anything the world can throw at us. He occupies the higher ground, and nothing can stand against His power.

1 John 4:4 (NASB)

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

Jesus taught us:

John 16:33 (NASB)

33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

That's what Revelation is trying to drive home to us. **"You are going to have trouble in this world"**. But take heart. Since you belong to Jesus - you will overcome.

Look at what they're doing:

Revelation 4:10-11 (NASB)

10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

This is true worship. When we praise and worship God on a regular basis, we focus our attention solely on Him and His throne of power.

We no longer focus our attention on our circumstances and difficulties. Instead we focus upon the God who has the power and the majesty and the desire to lift us up out of our despair and hopelessness.

That's why the four living creatures cry out:

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

God has always been there in the past. He's always with us in the present. And He'll always be there in the future when we need Him. He'll never leave us or forsake us, even in our darkest moments. That's why the 24 elders cast their crowns before His throne and sing this praise:

"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."

We SHALL OVERCOME, because we have the power of God in our corner.

III. A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

What unique experience did Isaiah, Paul, and the apostle John each share? They all saw heaven and came back to earth again.

Isaiah 6:1-3 (NASB)

6 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six

wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

Paul spoke of himself in the third person.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NASB)

12 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

The Bible teaches us that heaven is real and that what we are experiencing in our lives today is just a short vapor of time. Our bodies, where our spirits dwell, are much more like temporary dwelling places such as motels or tents instead of permanent homes.

2 Corinthians 5:1-5 (NASB)

5 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, ³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. ⁴ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

ILLUSTRATION:

A pastor's wife was visiting an aging lady in a nursing home. The lady had many health problems and the pastor's wife wanted to encourage her. So one night the pastor's wife ask the lady, "Wouldn't it be great if we could go to sleep one night and wake up with Jesus?" And the lady replied, "**Oh no, honey, I would need fifteen minutes to get ready!**"

Pause.

CONCLUSION:

Friend, when God calls you, you may not have fifteen minutes to get ready. Let me encourage you to get ready now! If you are not sure what will happen when you leave this earth, then by all means, let's talk. We don't want you to **hope** that you will go to heaven, we want you to **know!**

This world is not our home, we are just passing through. We must use this time on earth to prepare to GO HOME. John has given us a glimpse of the throne room of God to remind us that through Christ we can have victory. The blood of Christ, our testimony, and our faithfulness even unto death will provide the tools we need to overcome in this world.

He is Lord!