

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCT 7TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

*Revelation 4 begins the 2nd vision of Revelation with a scene of the throne room of heaven.*

*As we catch a glimpse of the power, holiness, and awesomeness of God, we're led to evaluate our worship of Him.*

## A DOOR IN HEAVEN (REV 4:1-2)

The phrase, "after this" concludes the 1st vision of Revelation (Jesus among the 7 churches, Rev. 1-3,), and begins the 2nd and longest vision of the book (Rev. 4:1-16:21).

- The emphasis of the 2nd vision is on Jesus and the events surrounding His return from the perspective of heaven.
- John sees an open door leading into heaven- like in the beginning of Ezekiel's visions (Ezek. 1:1).

In the New Testament, the heavens "opened" when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:16), when Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:56), and when Peter saw a vision of a sheet (Acts 10:11).

- The language of "open heavens" refers to divine, supernatural revelation- where God chooses to reveal something happening in the spiritual dimension to a human being.
- These moments in Scripture are so important!

As John sees a door to heaven, he hears the "1st voice"- that sounds like a trumpet blast- commanding him to "come up here".

- This voice (Jesus's) was summoning him to move so that he could receive further revelations of future events.
- A simple principle presented is that **God wants to reveal more of Himself to us- but we have to be willing to move!**

Some interpreters believe that the command to John to "come up here" is also referring to the "catching up" (the rapture) of Christians Paul mentions in 1 Thess. 4:17- however the singular verb used excludes that possibility.

- Jesus says to John, "I will show you what must take place after this"- it is Jesus that reveals what will happen in future as the sovereign King.
- He also says, it "must take place"- it will happen.

John then tells us, "he was in the spirit"- this marks the official beginning of a fresh visionary experience.

- By the power of the Holy Spirit, John was able to see and hear what those in a normal state here in this world can't see or hear.
- What actually happened to John's body?
- We don't know for sure, and it seems like others in the Bible that experienced this didn't either (2 Cor. 12:3-4)

As John enters into the heaven through the open door and is caught up in the Spirit, the FIRST THING he notices is a "throne" and "one seated on the throne".

- As the most glorious and maybe the most important vision of Revelation begins, what God wants John to see is the reality that **no matter what happens- God is always ruling and reigning on His throne!**

## A THRONE (REV 4:3-4)

John never gives his readers any detail on the throne- he simply wants all of the focus to be on the one who sat on the throne.

- Human language has limitations in describing the reality of God.
- God's form simply has the appearance of things like precious stones and rainbows.
- Jasper (similar to a diamond) is clear and showed God's clarity, brilliance, and purity.

Carnelian (red quartz) most likely symbolizes that God's judgment, wrath and anger against evil.

- John also records seeing a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald- most likely made up of various shades of green.
- Rainbows symbolize God's promise with humanity; green is also a symbol of mercy.
- Above all things, mercy and grace surround God.
- This scene is eternal- it transcends time.

Something that can be a bit confusing to those familiar with the doctrine of the trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is that John describes seeing ONE seated on the throne.

- The question is- if the God of the Bible is one God in three persons, who was the ONE that John saw on the throne?
- What will we see in heaven when we see God?

**God the Father (1 Tim. 6:16, John 6:46), God the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3, Matt. 3:16, Rev. 4:5)  
God the Son (Heb. 1:3)**

Most likely what John is describing is a vision he'd been given of certain aspects of God that he'd been allowed to see- no-one can see all of God and live (Ex. 33:20).

- John sees God the Father on the throne, God the Holy Spirit (vs. 5) around the throne, and God the son (5:6) as a lamb standing near the throne.
- In heaven, we will experience the presence of God through our relationship with Jesus.

John then describes twenty-four other thrones with twenty-four "elders" seated on them dressed in white garments and golden crowns.

- The most frequent interpretation of the 24 elders is that they are the 12 sons of Jacob (the old covenant people) and the 12 apostles of Jesus (the new covenant people of God).
- Others believe that they are an unknown class of heavenly beings created for worship.

Whoever they were, they appeared to John as old human males ("elders") dressed in garments to represent purity and crowns to represent power, majesty, and reward.

- This vision of God John receives gives us insight as to the nature of His being and character- **He's holy, He's powerful, He's gracious & merciful, He's triune and incomprehensible, and He's worshipped by all creation.**

## LIGHTNING, THUNDER, & FIRE (REV 4:5-6A)

From the throne of God itself came "flashes of lightning" and sounds of thunder.

- Surely for John this must've brought to mind God's manifestation of Himself to Israel at Mount Sinai where thunder, lightning, and smoke were present as the law was given.
- Before the throne John records seeing seven torches of fire that he identifies as the "seven spirits of God" (vs. 5).

What seems to be symbolized about the work of the Holy Spirit through this manifestation of lamps/torches is that the Holy Spirit illuminates the minds and hearts of God's people.

- The Holy Spirit is the person of God responsible for leading us to God's truth and leading us to greater holiness/purity in our lives.
- Before the throne appeared another amazing sight: "what looked like a sea of glass".

Notice he doesn't say he saw a sea of glass, but only "what looked like" such a thing.

- This is reminiscent of when Moses and Aaron "saw the God of Israel...under His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky" (Ex. 24:9-10).
- Glass making in ancient times was unable to produce clear glass like today.

Glass would've been cloudy at best.

- Some believe what John seems to be describing before God's throne is a picture of God's distinctness from everything else in our universe.
- He's so holy and unlike us in His perfection that there is represented before His throne a distance between Him and everything else.
- Others see the sea of glass as a perfect of God's omniscience- He sees and knows everything.

Imagine the most spectacular fireworks or laser lights show that you've ever seen.

- Everything that John is describing about the throne-room of God would put the most incredible special effects display we could ever come up with to shame.
- The sights and sounds surrounding God's presence are beyond human ability to describe adequately in writing.

## "IF I JUST SAW GOD LIKE THAT- THEN I'D WORSHIP!"

- EXODUS 19:16-20, 32:1,4

- Even after we have received a revelation of God and His character through the person of Jesus, through God's Word, and through the light of the Holy Spirit.
- When we don't see immediate results, instantaneous answers to our problems, or easy solutions to our hang-ups
- We can be so quick to turn our hearts, affections, time, energy, and attention away from the God of infinite glory and towards other things that have absolutely no power.
- Our absence of worship sometimes is not an issue with us not seeing God- it's an issue with us not believing that He's as glorious as He is.

## GOD IS...

- **Infinitely holy, pure, righteous, just, and powerful.**
- **Infinitely gracious, merciful, and loving.**
- **Infinitely worthy and deserving of our absolute surrender and worship.**

What is it that keeps you from walking through the open door to His presence?

What is it that keeps you from believing He's as worthy, holy, gracious, and loving as He says He is? How would your life be different if you chose to believe that the one who is ruling and reigning on a throne loves you perfectly and infinitely?