

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCT 14TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

What's a proper response to seeing the glory of God? What kind of response to God does He bless?

FOUR LIVING CREATURES (4:6B-8)

In Revelation 4, John is in the middle of an amazing vision in the throne room of God.

- Around God's throne there are shades of red, clear, and green light, thunder & lightning, seven torches of fire, and twenty-four elders on twenty-four thrones.
- Now John records seeing four living creatures on each side of the throne.

John didn't give a lot of detail about the appearance of the elders, but he does go into great detail about these creatures who are the closest of all created beings to God's throne.

- These creatures seem to match the descriptions of the beings that Isaiah and Ezekiel both saw in their visions of God (Isa. 6:2, Ezek. 1:10-11).
- Ezekiel identified these angelic beings as "cherubim"- they're mentioned often in the O.T.

These angelic beings are "covered with eyes, in front and in back" (vs. 6) as a symbol to mean that these creatures see unceasingly and are ever-watchful protectors.

- The creatures were like a lion, an ox, a flying eagle, and one had the face of a man.
- We have to pay attention to the use of the word, "like"- they were like lions and other animals-they weren't actually these things.

Why do they look like these animals in particular?

- One viewpoint is that the lion is the king of the untamed animals, the ox is the greatest of the domesticated animals, the eagle is the king of the birds, and the man is representative of humanity.
- The creatures symbolize that all nature is called on to declare the praises of God (Ps. 150), and these creatures serve as a reminder of this truth.

What is the function of these creatures?

- They are constantly worshiping God!
- The song that they sing is heard in Isaiah 6:3 and emphasizes the glory of God.
- They repeat, "Holy, holy, holy", most likely to represent the triune nature of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and begin the 3 part song that praise 3 attributes of God.

First, His holiness is praised ("Holy, holy, holy")- the fact that He's set apart and "other".

- Secondly, He's praised with a three-fold name- "Lord" (Yahweh), as the covenant keeping God of Israel, "God" as the uncreated one, & "Almighty" as the all-powerful one.
- Thirdly, His eternity is praised as the one who "was and is and is to come"- He's the God of the past, present, and future.

"**Holy**" שׁוֹדֵק – "**qadowsh**"

- Something that is "holy" is different, uncommon, and provokes in us amazement, fascination, and fear. Something that is "holy" is set apart and has a special purpose.
- **God describes Himself as being holy, but He also commands for His people to share in this attribute! (Lev. 11:45)**

A SONG OF WORSHIP (4:9-11)

John explains the meaning of the living creatures' praise as "glory, honor, & thanks".

- "Glory" simply means praise, "honor" means high respect or value- both of these are offered to God for who He is.
- "Thanks" is simply an expression of gratitude because of what God has done as the one who lives forever and ever.

John then sees the twenty-four elders falling down before the one who sits on the throne.

- The language John uses ("whenever the living creatures give glory...the twenty-four elders fall") is in the present tense- it means that this scene happens without ceasing.
- In worship, the elders present their crowns before the throne as a way of expressing that God's power and majesty are greater than theirs.

As they cast their crowns before Him, they sing a song of praise to "our Lord and God".

- This title for God isn't found anywhere else in the Bible, however the persecuted Church in that day probably knew the title very well.
- The Roman emperor Domitian blasphemously claimed this exact title for himself. God wanted the 1st Christians reading Revelation to see who was really in charge.

While the praise of the living creatures centered around who God is and His essential nature, the song of the elders centers around the glory of His creation.

- They worship because God created all things out of nothing because of His will.
- God's creative power includes both the act of creation AND His ongoing preservation of the created order.

Colossians 1:17 says that, "...in Him all things hold together."

- Right now, God is upholding and sustaining everything in all of His creation.
- This completely dismantles the idea that God is so detached and separated from the material universe that even though He created it He no interest in it.
- **God is upholding and sustaining you!**

"You created all things..."

- The Psalmists so often speak of "lifting up our eyes to the hills" and "considering the heavens" as a means to stir our hearts in worship to God.
- **As a society, we've become so dependent on artificial environments and have forgotten the value of seeing God in nature.**
- The false sense of security we receive from modern conveniences often prevents us from noticing how beautiful it is that God has created and sustains the world.
- **We are so much smaller and we are not as strong as we so often think we are.**

A PROPER RESPONSE (ISAIAH 6:1-7)

In the year that King Uzziah of Judah died, the prophet Isaiah records that he, "saw the Lord".

- King Uzziah had a very long and prosperous reign that included great military victories over the Philistines.
- Uzziah's life ended very tragically with him disobeying God and being struck with leprosy.
- So for Isaiah, this wasn't the greatest year- he was disillusioned and discouraged.

Isaiah may have been depressed or discouraged because a great leader of Judah was no longer on the throne.

- God in heaven now shows Isaiah, "Don't worry about it, Isaiah. Uzziah may not be on his throne, but I am on My throne!"
- God was "high and lifted up" with the "train" (hem) of His robe filling the temple-speaking of His honor, dignity, and sovereignty.

Surrounding the throne of God are angels known here as seraphim.

- In many other passages, these angels are known as cherubim, or as the living creatures.
- This is the only chapter in the Bible where these creatures are named seraphim.
- They had six wings, so each can cover his face, to cover his feet, and so each can fly.

The seraphim sang a song of praise to God and the foundations of the throne-room shook.

- Surely this was overwhelming for anyone, and it was all too much for Isaiah.
- When Isaiah saw the angels, in all their holy humility, obedience, and praise to God, he realized not only that he was unlike the Lord GOD, he was also unlike the angels.

They could cry out, "Holy, holy, holy" and praise God so beautifully, but he could not because he was a man of unclean lips.

- When Isaiah saw the LORD, he knew what kind of man he was.
- As poorly as he compared to the seraphim, that was nothing in relation to how he compared to the LORD.

This experience of the throne of God did not immediately make Isaiah feel good.

- The more clearly he saw the LORD, the more clearly he saw how bad his state was.
- When Isaiah saw the perfection and glory of God just being in His presence for a brief moment, he realized his deep sense of depravity and uncleanness.

In the midst of Isaiah's mourning, one seraphim flew to him with a live coal from the altar.

- It was so hot that even an angel had to use the tongs from the altar.
- The angel touched Isaiah's mouth with the coal and declared to him that "your guilt is taken away, and your sin is atoned for".
- There was a hot coal on the altar because there had been some kind of a sacrifice.

Isaiah could not remove his own guilt and his atonement was made possible by the altar- the place of sacrifice.

- The moment when Isaiah recognizes his poverty of spirit and cries out in an admission of guilt- that's when his sins are atoned for and he's declared clean.
- The same is true for us! When we truly encounter God, we realize we're not good.

The moment we recognize our poverty of spirit and admit our sinfulness is the very moment when we open our hearts to truly understand the Gospel.

When we truly encounter God, we're convicted of our sin, and when we confess our sin and receive His atonement, we can be cleansed.

What's your response?

Is it worship, gratitude, humility, and repentance?

Or is it indifference, entitlement, arrogance, and stubbornness?