

A SERIES THROUGH THE REVELATION

REVELATION 4 : THE CONTROL CENTER OF HUMAN HISTORY | 2.24.22

I. INTRODUCTION (Rev. 4:1-11)

- A. God is a Master author, which is why He's laid the Revelation in a very specific way. Understanding **Revelation 1-5** becomes essential for us to understand and trust God as we go through **Revelation 6-19**.
1. In **Revelation 1**, we see nearly 30 descriptions of Jesus' beauty, nature, and Personhood.
 2. In **Revelation 2-3**, Jesus makes clear that He's the Lord of His Church, the Head of His household. He affirms, corrects, and works to put His Church on the path which leads to life.
 3. Here in **Revelation 4**, the scene shifts from earth to heaven, the place where God's throne is firmly set. We learn that God is overseeing all things, that He's leading human history, and that His decisions on earth are being made through the lens of truth, compassion and mercy.
 4. Peter, in **1st Peter 4:17** tells us that judgment begins first in the house of God, and then moves to the nations. God is following this very pattern throughout the whole of the Revelation, reaching the Church first, and then moving into the nations of the earth, to those that are far from Christ.
- B. Because of how grounding these foundational Chapters are in the Revelation, we must become acquainted with them, both doctrinally, and devotionally. Because Jesus is about to apprehend the nations of the earth in a hostile takeover (**Rev. 6-19**), He's desiring that we are connected to His heart first, so that we can understand the movement of His hand.
- C. We all have a set of glasses that we wear that color our worlds. We don't see things perfectly, or even rightly, and often, even in Christ, our worldview is skewed. This is what John is setting before us, a correct, or proper worldview, a worldview to adjust and fix our vision. What feels real in this life, is often far from the truth of heaven.

II. JOHN'S VISION, AND THE THRONE OF GOD (Rev. 4:1-2)

1. **Revelation 4:1-2** "After these things I looked and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this. Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."
- B. John opens by saying, "After these things..." which means, after receiving the messages to the seven Churches (**Rev. 1:10-3:22**). With so many closed doors around John and God's family, and their lives being so hard-pressed, the door to Jesus, the door to heaven, and the door to supernatural resources remained open!
- C. This door that John sees isn't to be confused with the door of **Revelation 3:8** (*Kingdom authority/intimacy*) or the door of **Revelation 3:20** (*the door of the Church*). This door is a door of revelation that comes from God to mankind, so that we can see which we can't see on our own.
- D. Well, it's here on the Island of Patmos that John once again, "...heard (a voice) ...like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this. Immediately I was in the Spirit..."

1. Some see this reference to the trumpet, and John being caught up to heaven as a rapture event, and therefore it removes the Church from the following chapters and verses.
 2. One of the major objections to this, is that John goes up and down many times throughout this experience in the Revelation (**Rev. 10:1; 11:1; 13:1; 14:1; 18:1**).
- E.** But suddenly, John is caught up by the Spirit and taken where he could never go on his own. The Holy Spirit is our divine escort into the presence of God, into the knowledge of God, into the glory of God. Beloved, with God's invitation, always comes with the divine enablement to go through that open door.
1. I often pray, *"God, take me by a lock of my hair, and pull me into the Spirit just like you did Ezekiel (**Ezk. 8:3**). God, catch me up. Take me where I can't go on my own. You said that the Spirit searches out the deep things of God and makes them known to the heart, so Lord I ask, make them known to me (**1st Cor. 2:9-16**)."*
- F.** Life at this time was hard and getting harder. Rome's grip throughout this region was becoming more and more oppressive and repressive. Around 57 A.D., Nero began feeding Christians to the lions. Peter and Paul were killed during this time. But by 95 A.D., Domitian was expanding his reign of terror. He had more than 40,000 Christians killed. Timothy was severely beaten during this time. John himself was sentenced to *"rot and bleach on the rock, the rock of Patmos."*
- G.** But suddenly, amid all this, John sees that there's a throne, and One seated upon it. There's been no coup in heaven, no takeover, God is still ruling and reigning. John is looking directly at the command center in heaven, and it's fixed, its firm, there's a throne, and One seated upon it.
- H.** There is no possible way that we will be sustained in present, or the future trouble that's coming without clarity and understanding of God's glorious throne. It's this throne, and the glory of God that's within it that will sustain a heart in the middle of trouble.
1. The word throne appears 16 x's in **Revelation 4**, another 47 x's in the **Revelation**, and it's alluded to another 77 times.
- I.** The world's system would love us to think that there are many gods, and many ways to heaven. It's a lie. We're told here, and throughout the whole of the Revelation that there's only One seated upon the throne. And the One seated there never stands, or moves a finger.

III. THE NATURE OF GOD AS SEEN FROM HIS THRONE (Rev. 4:3)

1. **Revelation 4:3** *"And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald."*
- B.** Not only do we learn that God is leading all of human history, we also learn more about Him and His Personhood:
1. He Was Like A Jasper = This gives us insight into the way He looks, and the glory that shines from Him, much like that of a diamond. This is the bright light that radiates from His being (**SOS 5:10; 2nd Cor. 4:6; 1st Tim. 6:16; Rev. 21:11, 19-20**).

2. He Was Like A Sardius = This gives us insight into the heart of God's affections. His heart is like the deep red sardius stone. This speaks of His passion for weak, yet sincere followers of Jesus (**SOS 4:9; 8:6; Rev. 1:14**).
3. There Was An Emerald Rainbow Around His Throne = This rainbow represents the mercy He showed Noah when God gave a covenant to the entire human race concerning His glory and partnership with us. During crisis, we must have confidence that in repentance, and confession of sin, we are coming before a God who has an emerald rainbow over His head (**Gen. 9:13-17; Ps. 29:10; Ezek. 1:28**).
 - a. All that proceeds from His throne is being filtered through His mercy, even **Revelation 6-19**. The One, the only One, who's seated upon that firmly set throne in heaven, who's filled with blinding light, who's tender towards humanity, is doing everything in His control center with mercy.

IV. THE ACTIVITY AROUND THE THRONE OF GOD (Rev. 4:4-11)

- A. **Revelation 4:4** "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads."
 1. These 24 elders who are seated upon 24 thrones are a little bit mysterious. The four general assumptions are: (1) Angels (2) Exalted Old Testament saints (3) Angels who corporately represent Old and New Testament saints (4) Patriarchs who represent both the Old and New Testament.
 2. Beckwith, R. Charles, Moffat, Ladd, Beasley-Murray, Morris, Mounce, Johnson, Roloff, Kordel, Thomas all believe they are angelic beings (Grant Osborne, The Revelation, Pg. 229).
 3. Nevertheless, it's clear that they represent the governmental ministry of God as shared laborers with Him. The Father has chosen both angels and humans to share in His leadership over the nations, not because He must, but because He wants to.
 - B. **Revelation 4:5** "And from the throne proceeded lightning's, thundering, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."
 1. What we saw previously was what was around the throne of God, but now we are seeing what's coming from the throne. This is proceeding from God, as the throne of God and God are synonymous.
 2. This is taking us back to Mt. Sinai, to the great demonstration of power, glory and might. It's God demonstrating to the nations that He has the power, and right to judge the nations of the earth. That He alone is the Ruler, that He alone reigns in the heavens (**Ex. 19:16; Ezek. 1:13; Ps. 18:13-15; Job 37:2-5**).
 3. These lampstands aren't the same clay pots mentioned in **Revelation 1-3**, these are massive pillars, towering in strength, speaking about the fullness of God's presence through His Spirit. But the reality is, the Church, those lampstands, sustained by His presence are ever before Him.
 - C. **Revelation 4:6** "Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal."
 1. The sea to the Jewish people represented an unmeasurable depth, chaos, and something totally unknowable. It often speaks of the chaotic nations living outside the will of God. And in John's Day, the Church was like a skiff seemingly tossed about in the ocean of persecution and oppression.
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2. But here, John sees that it's calm, safe, and that though they are tossed, they are secure.

a. **Revelation 19-21** gives us the order in which God deals with things; *1st The beast and the false prophet (19:20); then the devil (20:1-3,10); then death (20:14), then hades, the place of death (20:14); and then the sea, the origin of all this, the chaotic mess, the sea of ungodly humanity. It's done.*

D. **Revelation 4:6-7** *"And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle."*

1. These four living creatures seem to be closer to **Ezekiel 10:14**, then they do of **Isaiah 6:1-3**, or should be taken as a mixture of both, like a combination. These living creatures are nearest to God's throne and show four different facets of God in redemption:

a. The First Living Creature Was Like A Lion = This face speaks of courage, the fierce fight and boldness that's needed to preserve. It's royalty, majesty, and power.

b. The second living creature was like a calf (OX) = This face speaks of serving through the mundane. It's strength and endurance.

c. The third living creature had a face like a man = This face speaks of intelligence and wisdom. Humanity has dignity that surpasses all animals.

d. The fourth living creature was like a flying eagle = This face speaks of swiftness and sovereignty.

E. **Revelation 4:8** *"The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come."*

1. When we worship, we aren't starting and stopping a service, we are entering into a worship service that's been going unceasingly. This is a part of what it means to fulfill Jesus' prayer that heaven, would come to the earth: unceasing adoration (**Mal. 1:11; Matt. 6:9-13**).

2. These living creatures, full of eyes, are always fascinated with God and His Personhood, never taking their eyes off Him for one second, eternally. And this knowledge, what they see, causes them to worship.

3. The same thing is true of us. When we see Him rightly, when we understand Him rightly and perceive Him truly, we also respond in worship, even unbroken or unceasing adoration. *We have a vision problem.*

4. Our response to God is often based on the culture of our Church, or our city, or our state, or region. But these aren't sufficient cultures from which we can base our worship of God on. We have to base it on truth, on reality, not our experience.

F. **Revelation 4:9-11** *"Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, and power, for You created all things and by Your will they exist and were created."*

1. Why are they worshipping like this? Because they know Who has created them, and who holds their next heartbeat. Friends, we know when we've seen rightly, when we worship. When our worship is freely given.

2. It was on Patmos, banished to death, alone, destitute, hunting for food that John chose to worship, to look to Christ, and it was there that John saw how things really are.
 3. What are you missing today because your unable to see the Father seated in heaven? What do you see in place of the throne? Is it challenges? Is it hurt? Is it obstacles? What is it? Friends, it all changes when we see Him, when we worship, not just with our hands, but with our hearts, with our eyes, with our lips, with our deeds!
 4. The word worship means 'worthship.' This means that every time it comes to worship, to the way we live our life for Christ, the people around you can see how much God is worth to you.
- G.** How would the seven Churches received this vision? Well, the ones under persecution, the ones under pressure and great distress would've seen it as glorious, as hopeful and lifegiving. But the ones with compromise, the ones with partnership in the world, they would've been terrified that the One who oversees them is Almighty.
- H.** *"John, family of God, future saints at Legacy Church, DON'T BE AFRIAD...THE FATHER IS ON THE THRONE, HE'S SEATED IN HEAVEN...RULING OVER ALL THINGS! Don't be tricked. There's more happening than what you can see."*