

What We See in Heaven

Revelation Series #4

Revelation 4 & 5

Revelation is a blessing book. It is not meant to scare us. It is meant to prepare us for the coming of the Lord. There is amazing imagery in the Book of Revelation. A great deal of it **will not** be interpreted to us. Words are used that say “*like a trumpet, like carnelian, like jasper, like a sea of glass.*”

Now some things are going to be very clear and are explained to us. For instance, in Revelation 5 there’ll be a reference to incense that John sees. He says that the incense he saw is the prayers of the saints down through the ages. But most of the imagery is not interpreted. The best rule of thumb in interpreting is lean is better than lavish. Lavish interpretations have often gotten us in a lot of trouble.

Today is our fourth message on the book of Revelation. Revelation, written by John on the Island of Patmos in 95 AD, is laid out for us in chapter 1, verse 19, when Jesus tells John, “**Write, therefore, what you have seen** [chapter 1], **what is now** [chapters 2&3] **and what will take place later** [chapters 4-22].”

Today, we’re going to talk about heaven.

Joke - A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat is very small. A little girl in class stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, “When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah.” The teacher asked, “What if Jonah went to hell?” The little girl replied, “Then you ask him”.

Story: A woman arrived in Heaven. She peeks through the gates and sees a beautiful banquet table. Sitting all around were her parents and all the other people she had loved and who had died before her. They saw her and began calling greetings to her.

When Saint Peter came by, he says to get in "You have to spell a word."

Which word?" the woman asked. "Love." The woman easily and correctly spelled "Love" and Saint Peter welcomed her into Heaven.

About a year later, Peter came to the woman and asked her to watch the Gates of Heaven for him that day.

While the woman was guarding the Gates of Heaven, her husband arrived. "I'm surprised to see you," the woman said, "how have you been?"

"Oh, I've been doing pretty well since you died," her husband told her. "I married the beautiful young nurse who took care of you while you were ill. And then I won the lottery. I sold the little house you and I lived in and bought a huge mansion. And, my new wife and I traveled all around the world.

We were just on vacation in Cancun and while I was water skiing, I fell and hit my head, and here I am. How do I get in?" "You have to spell a word," the woman told him. "Which word?" her husband asked. "Czechoslovakia."

There is a lot of mystery that surrounds heaven. The title of today's message is: **What do we see in heaven?**

When we hit chapter 4, John is taken up to heaven and he sees things in heaven and he tells us four times in chapter 4 and 5, "I saw" "I saw" "I saw" "I saw"

In fact, throughout the book of Revelation he says this 37 times "I saw."

The scene shift from chapter 3 to chapter 4 gives us the chronology for the rest of Revelation.

Revelation 4:1 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."

This "Come up here" corresponds to the "RAPTURE" as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 ***For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and***

are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

Notice the similarities between the rapture & John’s translation into Heaven.

- A. The voice says ‘COME UP HITHER”
- B. Both passages refer to a trumpet.
- C. John went to Heaven.

We talked last week about the rapture...particularly the pre-trib. You can watch or listen to that on Facebook, Youtube or on our website – eag.org

So, let’s pick up the story. Read Revelation 4

1 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.”

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

4 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.

5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

PRAY

5 Quick things happened to John.

1. He saw the door open in heaven.

- What he was about to see was coming from heaven, from God Himself?
- The future events were not of his own imagination.

- There are 3 doors mentioned in Revelation

Door 1 The Open Door for evangelism & missions, (Rev 3:8)

Door 2 The Door of the Human Heart. Every person has a door that has to be opened before Christ will enter. (Rev 3:20)

Door 3 The Door of Revelation. Once a person has opened the door of their heart to Christ, Christ reveals the glorious things of Himself, of God, of heaven, and of this world. In addition, Christ reveals some of the events that are to take place as history unfolds itself – (Rev 4:1)

2. He heard a commanding voice.

The very same voice he had heard in Rev Chapter 1 Verse 10

3. He was called to come up here into heaven

The reason is clearly stated: to see future events that must take place.

4. He was immediately in the spirit.

5. He saw God sitting on His throne

A key word in this chapter is Throne. It is used 14 times just in this chapter, and 37 times in the book of Revelation.

God's throne is the supreme seat of honor and majesty, of sovereignty and power. The appearance of the One on the throne is so glorious and majestic that He is indescribable.

Three Incredible Things John saw, that he wants us to see

1. He saw the Glory of God the Father

Look at verse three; ***“And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.”***

And in verse 5 it says, ***“From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.”***

You read that and you might think, I don't really get what he's saying here. He sees the Creator God but describes him in terms that are hard to grasp. What he is saying. Here's the issue. God is spirit, so it is very hard to physically describe God.

So what John is describing here is the glory of God. He saw a glorious One upon the throne, not described by human features, to be represented by a likeness or image, but only by his surpassing brightness. He sees God the Father on the throne, but it's mostly in terms of light. He was like a jasper stone and a ruby in appearance.

A jasper gives the appearance of a diamond. It's very clear and brilliant. The ruby is blood red. And interesting in the breast plate of the high priest, which has twelve stones, the first stone was a ruby, and the last stone was a jasper stone.

So, John sees what is described in 1 Tim 6:16 ***“that God who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.”***

So, John sees this blaze of glory, this unapproachable light coming from the jasper and ruby. And around the throne is a rainbow of emerald. This green color speaks of life, and the refreshing nature of the new covenant.

The rainbow speaks of the promises of God. He is a covenant-keeping God. We find the rainbow first mentioned in Genesis 9 when the Lord says to Noah, I will never destroy the world again by a flood and the sign of the covenant is a rainbow. The rainbow is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise which God has made with Christ, as the Head of the church, and with us.

And then in verse 4, we see Four-and-twenty seats around the throne, were filled with four-and-twenty elders, representing, probably, the whole church of God. Their sitting denotes honor, rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne signifies nearness to God, the sight and enjoyment they have of him. They were clothed in white raiment; and they had on their head's crowns of gold.

Verse 5 says, ***“From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder.*** Lightnings and rumblings and peals of thunder came from the throne; the declarations God makes to his church, of his sovereign will and pleasure.

In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. The number seven is used over 50 times in Revelation...it's the number of

completion. Concerning the Holy Spirit, Isaiah 11:2 talks about seven attributes of the Spirit: The Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord)

Verse 6, Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

Sea of glass-before the throne of God, represents holiness and righteousness, purity, notice that it is calm. All is calm before the throne of God

7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

The big question is **who are these guys**. Four living creatures...eyes all about...makes you think of some kind of insect that has eyes all over.

When the scripture says these four living creatures are covered with eyes, it just means they can see everything. They can discern what is always going on.

The bible gives us another picture of these beings in Ezekiel and Isaiah.

In Isaiah they are referred to seraphim. In Ezekiel they are referred to as cherubim.

What are these four living creatures? There is one clue though from a first-century rabbinic saying that says, "The mightiest among the birds is the eagle, the mightiest among the domestic animals is the ox, the mightiest among the wild beasts is the lion, and the mightiest of all is man." This ancient saying is referring to the whole of creation. Is that what this is referring to? We don't know.

Someone else has interpreted these creature representing

a) four gospels b) all creation c) four standards of Israel by which they camped, in the middle was the Shechinah glory in the temple of the living God

1) like a lion - gospel of Matthew - Jesus is represented as king, he came from the nation of Judah

2) like an ox servant - gospel of Mark, Jesus represented as servant

3) face as a man- gospel of Luke Jesus represented as the Son of a man

4) like an eagle - gospel of John Jesus represented as deity

We do know that these four creatures are very important because they are involved in the worship. And not only are they involved in worship, but they're also involved in judgment, because we read about them 11 times in Revelation.

And in some verses, they are giving out God's judgment. And so, these four creatures are really critical. They surround the throne. They remind us of and tell us that God is holy, holy, holy.

It says in verse 8 ***'Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: " 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, 'who was, and is, and is to come.'***

Now this is why they are like the seraphim in Isaiah 6 because we find them day and night saying 'holy, holy, holy' is the Lord God Almighty.

But we also have the four living creatures that look like the cherubim in Ezekiel. We don't know that they are the same or something different, but we do know they lead the worship, and constantly say, 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

Now why do they say holy, holy, holy? We read in first John that God is love. So, it makes sense that in heaven they would say that God is 'loving, loving, loving is the Lord God Almighty.' Why don't they say merciful. Or thinking about His power. Why don't they say omnipotent, omnipotent, omnipotent? That's too hard to say.

The song reminds us of John 1: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word is with God, all things were made through him, without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). It sounds a lot like Genesis 1: "In the beginning God said ... and there was light"; in the beginning God created it and called it good.

They say holy, holy, holy because if there is one word that best describes God, it would be holy, *hagios* in the Greek. It means sacred, set apart, and God is sacred and set apart from every other living thing. God is not created, He is the Creator,

but set apart from His creation. And there is no one like God. Holy is the Father, Holy is the Son, and Holy is the Spirit...the Godhead three in one.

And it says in verse 9, ***“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne {Just so you know, that’s what we need to do every day} and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 “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 worship Him who is holy, holy, holy. We worship Him who lives for ever and ever. You know that song we sing holy, holy, holy, there is a verse in that song that says, ‘casting down their golden crowns, around the glassy sea.’ That comes from right here in Revelation 4.

The elders mentioned here most likely represent the Old Testament & the New Testament believers. For instance, every minister is an elder of his church.

In (1 Chronicles 24) 24 elders were chosen to represent the entire Levitical priesthood.

Further on in the Book of Revelation, we will learn there are 12 gates in the New Jerusalem. The names of the 12 patriarchs of the tribes of Israel are inscribed on those 12 gates. In addition, the 12 apostles are named for the foundations of the city. So, we have 12 patriarchs from the Old Testament & 12 apostles from the New Testament. I conclude that these 24 elders represent all the saints of God.

To the church at Sardis, the Lord says, “to him who overcomes I will give white garment to clothe themselves.”

To the church in Smyrna He says, “be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.”

He even says to the church in Laodicea, “he who overcomes I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne.”

So, you have the throne, the white garments, and the crown. Doesn’t sound like angels to me, but of the redeemed.

Four-and-twenty seats around the throne, were filled with four-and-twenty elders, representing, probably, the whole church of God. Their sitting denotes honor, rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne signifies nearness to God, the sight and enjoyment they have of him. They were clothed in white raiment; the imputed righteousness of the saints and their holiness: they had on their heads crowns of gold, signifying the glory they have with him.

The first thing that John sees is, The Glory of the Father. The second thing John sees is...

2. The Search for One who is Worthy

Chapter 5; ***1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"***

The search went out. Is there anyone who is worthy to break the seals and open the scrolls?

This scroll was sealed up with seven seals. In Revelation 6 they start to open the scroll and break the seals. [\[show picture of Roman scroll with seven seals\]](#)

This is what it would have looked like. It would have been written on both sides, with wax seals. It would have been written and then sealed, and then written some more and then sealed. You open it by breaking the seal and reading what was written up to the next seal.

And people ask, what was the scroll? What does it represent? Some say it represents the Lamb's Book of Life, some say it represents the New Covenant, others say it represents the title deed to the earth.

I like what one man said. He said in Roman Law, a will and testament was sealed with seven seals, by seven witnesses, before its legality could be established.

What is this scroll? It is the will and testament of God the Father. Who is worthy to take that? Here's the problem. Adam who was given dominion over the whole world, lost it when he sinned; and Satan had it. And when Jesus came, who is

called the second Adam in 1 Corinthians 15, came to destroy the ruler of this world, Satan.

So, the word goes out, who can restore the world back to the way it was. **3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.**

The elder says to John, "stop weeping." Do you ever wonder if there will be tears in heaven? Well, John was in heaven, and he had tears. The bible says that the Lord will wipe away every tear. I believe there will be tears in heaven. After we are raptured, we all will go through something called the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Bema seat where your life will be tested. This is not about your salvation. It's about what you did for the Lord and what reward will you receive.

1 Corinthians 3 says he will test the quality of each person's work by fire. And there may be many in heaven who will be weeping because they will see their whole lives go up in smoke, because all they did, even as a Christian was all for themselves.

John is weeping because there is no one who is found worthy. No one able to do the will of God. **Then one of the elders said, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.**

And John looks to see the LION, but he sees a LAMB. I thought you said the lion of the tribe of Judah...yes...the lion is the lamb. He's the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

He said I saw a lamb, slain. John can tell he has been pierced. He has been wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

He is the lamb, slain before the foundation of the world. It is well said that the only man-made thing in heaven will be the wounds on Jesus' hands and feet and the piercing in his side.

I like the song where Fanny Crosby sings, I shall know Him when I get to the other side by the wounds in His side.

The lamb has seven horns, speaking of power, and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God.

The lion is the lamb that has overcome. He took the scroll from the right hand of he who sits on the throne. Jesus came the first time and was spit upon and a crown of thorns put on his head. But when Jesus comes again, he will sit on His everlasting throne to rule and reign forever more. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

John saw the glory of God, He saw the search for the one who was worthy, and thirdly,

3. He sees the Worship of the Father and the Son

8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

They each have a harp and a golden bowl of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. So, we don't have to know what the golden bowl is for...it's the prayer of God's people.

Now the harp was used in the Old Testament to worship God, but it was also used in the Old Testament for prophecy. There is an account in 2 Kings 3 where Elisha said, bring me a harpist." While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came on Elisha, and he prophesied.

There is a connection with the harp and prophecy. We have the prayers of the saints and the harp and here is what the Lord is saying. Everything that was prophesied in the Old Testament and prayed culminates in the Lamb as he comes and takes the scroll. And it says in verse 9...

9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

We have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb.

Johnson Oatman, Jr. who was a hymn writer in the 1800's wrote a song: There is singing up in heaven based on these verses. [Listen to these words](#)

There is singing up in Heaven such as we have never known,

Where the angels sing the praises of the Lamb upon the throne;

Their sweet harps are ever tuneful, and their voices always clear.

O that we might be more like them while we serve the Master here!

But I hear another anthem, blending voices clear and strong,

"Unto Him Who hath redeemed us and hath bought us," is the song;

We have come through tribulation to this land so fair and bright,

In the fountain freely flowing He hath made our garments white.

Then the angels stand and listen, for they cannot join the song

Like the sound of many waters, by that happy, blood-washed throng;

For they sing about great trials, battles fought and vict'ries won,

And they praise their great Redeemer, who hath said to them, "Well done!"

Chorus:

Holy, holy, is what the angels sing,

And I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring;

But when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings,

For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings.

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" 13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Everything worships God. And notice the worship that went to God in chapter 4 goes to the Son here in chapter 5. Jesus told his disciples, "If you've seen the me you've seen the father."

When we talk about worship, it comes from an Old English word that means **wor~~th~~ship**. And when we worship, we acknowledge the worth of the Lord. There are four aspects of worship we see in these verses. **True worship is this:**

1. Recognition of who God is. He is holy, holy, holy
2. Realization of being in His presence
3. Relinquishing of your will to God; thy will be done
4. Readiness to obey Him

Believers will worship in heaven, but if you've never really worshipped on earth, I'm not sure you will get the chance to worship in heaven.

Here's the take-away for us

I. Focus on God's Place

We need to constantly have our focus tweaked so that we are centered on God. Everything in heaven, the emerald rainbow, the thrones of the 24 elders, the 4 living creatures are described as around the throne of God - focused exclusively on God's position in the center of heaven.

II. Focus on God's Power

The throne is the seat of power and authority, and the place from which God exercises His dominion. "From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder". These flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder are pictures of God's awesome power - they are images designed to communicate the scope and magnitude of God's power.

III. Focus on God's perfection

He is a Holy God, perfect in every way, completely and totally morally pure.

As we focus on the holiness of God we are immediately confronted with our own sin in comparison. When Isaiah was ushered into this same throne room, he fell to the ground and cried ***"Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and (now) my eyes have seen the king, the Lord Almighty."*** (Is. 6:5).

Focusing on God's holiness makes us realize our sinfulness. And that changes our attitude regarding how we approach the situation - we can accept the love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness that only God can give us.

Focus on God's position - acknowledge God at the center of the universe and make Him the center of your life.

Focus on God's Power - what problem in our lives will seem insurmountable when our focus is on the power of God!?!

Focus on God's perfection - on His holiness - and allow that focus to purge you of sinful actions and attitudes and keep you from falling back into sinful ways.