



DATE: December 11, 2011

TEXT: Revelation 4: 1-11

TITLE: "The Throne of God"

We now begin what is considered to be the heart of Revelation. Revelation is based on 4 visions given to John. We have been looking at the first vision... Jesus talking about the 7 churches. Today we begin the second vision of John. In this vision John sees **"what must take place after this."** The vision begins with John entering the very throne room of God. It is one of the most beautiful visions given in all the bible.

Let me begin with a word of caution. We must not lose sight of the forest by studying the trees. I do not believe John, as he was having this vision, said to himself.. "this image stands for this.. And this stand for this.. And this stands for this." John was given an overall picture of the magnificence of God. Our text has one primary lesson on the worship of God. We will look at this lesson. We do not want to miss the lesson by overly stressing the symbolism of the vision. However.. This is Apocryphal writing. Very, very symbolic. And the symbols have wonderful, wonderful lessons.

One other beginning statement. The symbols of Revelation are not always clear cut. I will use this primary rule of interpretation.... I will let scripture interpret scripture. Many of the sights seen in revelation are also seen in other parts of the bible.... especially in Ezekiel and in Daniel. We will see today that sometimes these prior visions give meaning to John's vision. Sometimes they do not. I will share 5 images that John sees in this wonderful vision

Image # 1 John enters the throne room of heaven and immediately focuses on God. We see a wonderful vision of God. *Rev. 4: 2-3*

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.

Let me ask this question... how do you picture God? If a friend were to come to you and ask you to describe God... what would you say? We could talk about Jesus... who is God...and that we can picture... but that is not really a full picture of God.

First see what John did not do. He did not even try to describe God in human terms. At times Scripture does describe God in human terms (anthropomorphic language). We talk about the "right hand of God." We talk about God "walking through the garden" We talk about the

“ear or the mouth of God.” The Bible uses human terms to try to help us understand God... but know this... God is not a man. God is as far above man as man is above an amoeba.

How does John see God. He see jasper (which was like a diamond), ruby and an emerald rainbow. In other words... he sees light.... clear light.... red light and green light. He see illumination and brightness. *1 John 1:5 states*

“God is light; in Him there is not darkness at all”

I grew up in Western New York. We were about 15 to 20 minutes away from Niagara Falls. We went there often. My favorite time to go to the Falls is in mid winter when it is very, very cold out at night. No crowds. The trees and the buildings and the guard rails and the grass is covered with a thick layer of ice where the mist has frozen. At night the lights are on. The lights are in front of beautiful, beautiful gardens on the Canadian side. There are three of them and they are huge spotlights. When they are on you can not look at them... they are too bright. And they shine forth on this beautiful creation of God... and the ice is shimmering and many different colors and magnificent.

In my mind's eye this is a small vision of what John sees. God is light. God is power. God illuminates all. That is our God

We must be careful to not overly squeeze God into something we can comprehend. Yes, Jesus is God and desires an intimate relationship with us... last week's sermon. Yes God wants us to comprehend Him so he sent Jesus and he uses human descriptions that we can understand.... but we must never be "comfortable" with God. We must never fit God into our comfortable mind set. God is almighty. God is holy. God is creator of the universe. God all powerful. Never get comfortable in the presence of God.

Image # 2 (now it get harder). We are given the image of the 24 elders that surround the throne of God. They are mentioned a number of times in the book of Revelation and always are surrounding the throne. Who or what are these? Let me tell you there are 2 opinions... both are about equally held.

Opinion # 1 is that these are angels. They are a heavenly host that always surround the throne of God. *Psalm 89: 5-8 states...*

5 The heavens praise your wonders, LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. 6 For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD?

Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? 7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. 8 Who is like you, LORD God Almighty? You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

1 Kings 22: 19 states...

Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

This is very, very possible, The heavenly hosts surround the throne and worship Him

The second opinion is that they are the men, representing the leaders in the old covenant and the new covenant. They are the 12 patriarchs of the Old Testament and the 12 apostles of the New Testament. They represent the entire church. *Revelation 21: 12-14 describes the gates in the New Jerusalem. It states...*

It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles are held in great honor. Elder is not usually a name given to angels and this opinion explains the number 24.

Which is right? I don't know. I lean toward the second one... but we will all find out together when we enter the throne room of God. And truthfully.. It's not critically important.

The actions of the 24, regardless of who they are, is most important

Image # 3 The thunder, the lightening, the 7 spirits and the sea of glass. *Rev 4: 5-6*

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. 6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

We have already seen that the 7 spirits is the Holy Spirit. The thunder, lightening, and the sea of glass point to the attributes of God. Have you ever seen lightening strike nearby? It is frightening. Have you ever been awakened by a thunder clap that almost knocked you out of bed. Again the power is amazing. God is all powerful. God is frightening. God is brilliant. God is awesome.

The Sea of Glass is a mystery. Most believe it points to the omniscience of God. Before His throne he can look down and see His creation. It is clear. He sees all. He know all. Nothing is hidden from the sight of God.

Image # 4 The four living creatures. They are described in *Rev. 4:6-8*

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 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. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings.

What are these? Good news... we know. Ezekiel also had a vision. In Ezekiel 1 and 10 we read a very, very similar description of these 4 living creatures and they are given a name... they are Cherubim. What are Cherubim? They are angels with high rank and a specific purpose. They are guards. In Genesis 3 after the fall of man and they are cast out of the Garden of Eden... Cherubim were set to guard the garden. Cherubim were depicted on the sides of the Tabernacle to guard the ark. *Psalm 99: 1 states...*

**1 The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble;
he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.
2 Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations.
3 Let them praise your great and awesome name— he is holy.**

We see a great picture of the throne surrounded by the 24 elders and by the angelic host.

Image # 5 We see the host of heaven worshipping the Lord God Almighty. *Rev 4:8-11*

Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne 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.”

Here is the central message of our text. Everything else is secondary. All of creation

worship the Lord. Holy, Holy Holy is our Lord.... worthy of honor glory and power. I read this definition of holy this week in *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges.

As used in scripture, holiness describes both the majesty of God and the purity and moral perfection of His nature. God's holiness then is perfect freedom from all evil. We say a garment is clean when it is free from any spot, or gold is pure when all dross has been refined from it. In this manner we can think of the holiness of God as absolute absence of evil in Him.

Isaiah had a similar vision *Isaiah 6:1-4 states*

I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

**“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”**

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Here is the wonderful picture of heaven. What will we do when we leave this earth and enter into heaven? We will join this chorus. We will stand before the throne of God and we will sing... ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God most high.

We begin on this earth. Now we worship God. Now we stand before His throng in this sanctuary. Now the Light of the World is in this place. Now we praise His name. Now we bow before Him. Join the elders, join the Cherubim and worship the Lord in joy and gladness. Begin

now what will last for eternity.

AMEN