

## Heaven's Door Opened

**Text:** Revelation 4.1–11

**Theme:** God is on His throne being worshiped and praised as He rightly deserves

### Introduction — We come now to Revelation 4

- I believe Rev 4 & 5 are the hinge upon which all the rest of Revelation swings
- Rev 1 is the grand overview of the whole book: it is Christ revealed at the get-go
- then there are the seven letters to seven churches
- they're helpful, they present challenges for us to take up
- but often they're viewed as stand alone documents
- but notice something: told about each church, problems each faced
- they are told to overcome, to conquer; promised amazing rewards if they do
- but they're not told how: how are they to conquer their issues before each of them
- that's what Revelation 4 & 5 are for: you want to know how to conquer? Read this! Believe it!
- and then, when you get into ch. 6 and beyond: all the judgments, all the evil, all the battles
- how can you endure such things? How do you hold on to faith in all this?
- you have a heart captured by the radiant splendor of God's glory given in rev. 4 & 5
- so all Rev. hinges upon these two chapters that depict what biblical worship looks like

### Imagine what it would be like to see God like the vision John sees in Revelation 4

- we are being given an eye-witness testimony to the throne-room of heaven
- it is one of the fullest descriptions of God on His throne in the whole of Scripture
- and we need what this text gives us
- we need this because we do not see Him now
- you & I walk by faith, not by sight
- the faith we walk by is in part faith that what we are given here about God is certainly true

### We need Rev. 4.1–11 today as much as seven churches did

- Ephesus had lost its first love and it needed to be rekindled
- Smyrna's believers were being killed and needed this God to be their God
- church at Pergamum needed this truth to avoid temptation of false teachers
- Thyatira was heading off into sin and needed this vision of pure holiness
- the only way dead Sardis could be made alive was by the One who makes alive
- courage comes from such a heavenly vision and Philadelphia needed more courage
- finally, the nauseating lukewarmness of Laodicea could only be cured by this God

### I wonder if our spiritual state matches any one of these situations

- the things of God have begun to lose their luster
- you're being called to make sacrifices for God, but you're struggling with this call
- and who of us doesn't face the temptations of pleasure and worldliness each day?
- we need to see God, the God John saw
- our hearts need to be gripped by the exceedingly great glory of God
- so let's ask God to have His Spirit make Revelation 4.1–11 alive to us as we see God on His throne being worshiped and praised as He rightly deserves.

### PRAY

*Let's begin by seeing...*

#### I. THE ONE UPON THE THRONE, 4.1–6A

- John is consumed by the Holy Spirit here and is given vision of heaven
- four times this phrase occurs in Revelation
- each time is a significant turning point in the revelation John receives
- no different here, as John, in the Holy Spirit, is taken up into heaven in a vision
- this vision starts out with the throne and works out from there
- once on the outer rim, he is brought back again to the center

### 1. The door opened

- at the end of Rev. 3, Jesus was standing at the door of Laodicea knocking
- right after this, to start Rev. 4, John sees a door standing open in heaven
- while Laodicea's door may have been closed to Jesus, door of heaven thrown open for John
- how sad it is that so many churches have their door shut to Jesus
- the One who died to save her, to make her His bride & they close Him out
- they reject His Word, His salvation, His gospel, His lordship over them
- as such, Jesus says He'll spew such churches out of His mouth & presence

### 2. The voice that speaks

- this reminds us of Rev 1.10
- *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet*
- Jesus was speaking to John there and does so again here in Rev 4.1
- imagine it: being called up into heaven by the risen and reigning Lord!
- oh, brothers & sisters, some day soon it will happen, will it not?
- John hears the voice...the voice of Jesus, just like 1.10

### 3. Shown what must take place

- so much of this echoes Rev. 1, doesn't it; this is like Rev. 1.1
- so what is going to take place after this?
- first off, when is the "after this"? I think it is what is now being revealed & rest of Revelation
- then onward into the future from there, to us, and beyond
- okay, so what is taking place?
- eternal worship of the living God and His Christ
- here it is in v. 2: "and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne."

### 4. What—or who—John saw on that throne

- let your imagination run wild for moment here with this beatific vision of God on His throne
- can't be too extravagant trying to see & describe the colors
- can't be stretched too far to imagine the space that John is given to see
- sounds you hear not too impressive, too surprising, too overwhelming
- this is the Almighty God upon His throne
- I don't think we can overdo what John gives us here
- after all, God is incomprehensible & John is still giving task of comprehending it...to us!
- *"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable!"* (Psa 145.3)
- *"Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."* (Job 11.7–9)
- and yet, he tries to tell us what he was seeing

#### 1) jasper, carnelian, and rainbows of green, oh my!

- I don't think we are to try to figure out what these are

- I believe they are given to show how precious God's glory is
- so radiant, so brilliant, so resplendent, so lustrous and dazzling, we can't even picture it
- these stones & gems are used in the OT, in the OT priest's breastplate
- Isaiah saw a rebuilt Jerusalem that had jasper used in its buttresses
- Ezekiel makes a connection with these and the Garden of Eden
- all of which reflect the glory of God
- then there is the rainbow which was a sign of God's promise, of His patient mercy
- God's glory, power, authority and mercy: all shining from His throne
- imagine the most beautiful thing you've ever seen and then imagine it 100x more beautiful
- now, multiply that by infinity and you might get close to what John was seeing here
- absolute pure beauty, no defect, utter perfection, 10,000x more lovely than all things

## 5. The ones around the throne

- twenty-four elders seated on twenty-four thrones
- lightnings, rumblings, and peals of thunder
- along with seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God
- before the throne a sea of glass, like crystal
  - 1) first, who are the twenty-four elders?**
    - some think they might be angels, but angels never pictured in white with crowns
    - most likely: represent twelve tribes of Israel from OT
    - and represent twelve apostles from NT
    - together, they represent the saints from both Old & New Testaments
    - we see white garments & golden crowns promised to seven churches to overcomers
- think about these twenty-four beings for moment
- what is promised by God has to be more real to us than things that keep us from conquering
- what tempted Laodicea, most recent church studied? Things of world & comforts brought
- what is it that keeps you from being zealous for God?
- are you bored with God, with Christianity; other things more interesting than God?
- caught up in TV, Netflix, video games, online pornography, gambling... what?
- this chapter here to convince you: God is infinitely more interesting than TV, porn or games
- you can fritter your life away, but you will never know this joy: now or ever
  
- maybe your struggle isn't being bored with God but battle with worldliness & world is winning
- like Sardis, you've struck a deal with world: I want my cake and to eat it too
- put on a good front on Sunday mornings or Wednesday nights
- yet, you avoid confessing name of Jesus so you won't offend this sensitive little ol' world
- you want pleasure of world's stuff & to look decent enough with Christian friends
- but what will you gain from compromise with this world?
- you won't get a white garment; you won't get a golden crown; you won't be around throne
- so, ask yourself this: is what I'm cheating God with here better than God Himself?

### 2) lightning & thunder

- if you've been reading Bible through this year & through Exodus by now, you know
- this is scene from Mount Sinai, isn't it
- this represents God's holiness & righteousness & justice
- more like this will come when judgments poured out: Rev 8 & 11 & 16

### 3) seven torches

- also seen this before—ch. 1— and we know this represents Holy Spirit of God

- this also cues us in: worship of God is always Trinitarian: Father, Son, and Spirit
- it is God the Father on the throne, isn't it?
- and here is the Holy Spirit, everywhere around the throne, right?
- but some ask: where is Jesus? yes, indeed, in next chapter, for sure
- but remember: His is the voice like a trumpet—Jesus is right there as well

#### 4) sea of glass

- 1 Kings 7 tells us bronze basin in temple, used for purification & washing called “the Sea”
- Ezekiel 1 again, describes this massive crystal all around like a great expanse
- I believe this presents a great separation of purity and holiness between us & God
- He is transcendent, set apart, holy, holy, holy

#### 6. Burn these images into your heart & mind

- God is on His throne; never moved off it by anyone or anything
- worshiped and praised as He rightly deserves
- pray that your imagination is captured by ch. 4 & 5
- pray that these would hold your desires to Him, not to this decrepit old world
- ask God that next time confronted with some temptation of world
- that you'd remember Rev 4 & desire to conquer and gain your reward

*Now, let's move on to see...*

## II. THE WORSHIP AROUND THE THRONE, 4.6B–11

- really, begun at throne and worked outward
- now, let's, as it were, work our way back to throne
- throne is absolutely central, not just to ch. 4, but all of Revelation; mentioned 14x alone here

### 1. The creatures of worship

- four living creatures: strange seems to put it mildly, does it not?
  - full of eyes in front and behind—imagine trying to draw a literal picture of this
  - that's not what's intended for these living creatures represent something to us
  - also, four different faces on each of these living creatures
  - and by the way, if you ARE bored with God, you've never read this chapter, have you?
  - use extra caution here: note— first creature was “like” and so forth
  - not literal, but like something: lion, ox, man, and eagle — what do these picture for us?
  - could be speaking of characteristics of God as these critters reflect His glory
  - but I think, more accurately, they represent all of God's creation in creatures
  - here is God's creation, singing out, crying out in abject worship & praise
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- then what's up with all the eyes?
  - this points us to the omniscience, all-seeing, all-knowing God of His creation
  - He is sovereign over everything: knows it, sees it, watches over it, controls it
  - this entire throne room scene so reminiscent of Isaiah 6, is it not? John borrowing images here
  - even down to the wings
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- and what do they do? They never cease to say: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come!
  - what keeps us from doing this: never ceasing to worship God as thrice-holy God?
  - well, for one, we simply don't see our sin in proper perspective
  - we also don't know everything from past, , our present, and definitely not the future

- so question is: will you accept the testimony of these four living creatures?
- one more thing, before we briefly examine their songs: v. 9–10
- giving glory & honor & thanks to the Eternal One
- and twenty-four elders are doing what? Casting down crowns
- all reward they received for being overcomers: they give right back to God who gave it to them
- after Easter, going to spend a few Sundays examining this kind of worship
- what it is, according to Scripture, how we are to worship, according to Scripture
- and what it looks like and sounds like, all according to Scripture

## 2. The songs that they sing

- consider first off this song of God's holiness
- God's holiness ought to put the "fear of God" into us
- like that brilliant flash of lightning that catches you off guard
- like follow-up crash of thunder that rattles whole house & makes you wonder what's next
- God is thrice holy; cannot have presence of sin before Him at all
- but praise the Lord God Almighty, there is a mediator between God & man: Jesus Christ
- yes, God is holy, holy, holy, but He has satisfied His holiness against your sin
- Behold our God seated on His throne  
Come let us adore Him  
Behold our King, nothing can compare  
Come let us adore Him

- the second song of heavenly worship lifts up our sovereign God in all His creation
- not only did God create, He sustains it all
- if God willed it, the beams, drywall, roof and shingles above us would collapse or disappear
- and so would we, but by His word of Great Power, we are sustained

- here is the motivation you need today...tomorrow...and days to come
- this is how you stand against the world, the flesh and the devil
- this is how you remain faithful to God
- you pursue greater holiness, greater godliness, greater Christlikeness
- every triumph, every bit of conquering, all ability to overcome is given you right here

### **Conclusion — God is on His throne being worshiped and praised as He rightly deserves**

- right this very moment, this is going on in heaven
- what we've done here this morning is merely rehearsal for this when we join the throng
- our great God, seated upon His throne, ruling, reigning, radiating His glory everywhere
- there is the seven-fold Spirit of God before and around Him
- there is the risen, resurrection, glorified, ascended and reigning Christ calling us to worship
- this is the ultimate reality: all creation is made to echo back to God His glory
- this is the world as it should be, as it will be
- He is holy, He is worthy, He is to be worshiped
- let us join them and never ceasing singing praise to Him