

Apokalypsis – The Throne Room

Text: Revelation 4-5

Theme: The Book of Revelation, End times, prophecy, Apocalyptic Literature

- Chapter 4 begins the largest section of Revelation that has to do with the “things that are to come”. (Outline slide) These are then future events from John’s position in the first century. **Look at 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.”**
 - I believe chapters 4-5 are central to the entire book of Revelation. Chapters 4 and 5 are John’s vision of Throne of God! Everything to come – all that will “take place after this” flows out of the throne room!
 - So **two main components** in my message today. First, let’s consider what John saw, and then consider what it means for us today.
1. **What John saw:** He sees a lot and notice the rich, colourful, symbolic language of apocalyptic writing... Are you ready?
 - **4:2 – “a throne in heaven...”** We all witnessed the “throne” of American leadership on Friday with the Inauguration of President Trump. In Canada, whenever a new session of Parliament opens we have a “throne speech” from the Governor General. The Governor General being the designate of the Throne of Her Majesty the Queen herself! A throne is a seat of authority. But here, the apostle John, way back in the late 1st Century was given a vision of the Throne of All Thrones – the Throne of Almighty God! The throne John saw represented the **“sovereignty, majesty, and kingly rule”** of God! (Stott). We need to resist fear and fatalism in our days because at the center of the universe is the throne of God. He rules with ultimate sovereignty, majesty, strength, wisdom, and power! John’s vision of the God’s throne reminded him and us to never forget that behind what we see, is what we do not see – **the kingly rule of God!** So again, everything to come in the Book of Revelation flows from the throne room of God.
 - “...one sitting on the throne”. **4:3 – ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.** What is John describing here? To me he is using metaphors of precious jewels and a rainbow

to describe Light itself. When light is refracted through a prism – what do you see? Colour and glimmer and the refraction of light. God is light! Sure John could have said that plainly, but apocalyptic literature uses metaphors as descriptors. I think what John is describing is the pure light of God refracting. Listen to one of the apostle Paul's benedictions. This one in 1 Timothy 6:15–16 – “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

- “...24 other thrones and 24 elders”. **Revelation 4:4 - ⁴Surrounding 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.** How do we identify these elders? Some focus on the number 24 and then see the 12 tribes represented as well as the 12 apostles. These 24 elders then represent all of the redeemed people of God. Others, like D.A. Carson see the 24 elders as one of the heavenly, angelic order of beings. Elders. Cherubim & Seraphim. Living creatures and angels around the throne. So D.A. Carson sees angelic creatures here and if he's right, you get this picture that around the throne of God is league upon league, rank upon rank of God's holy angels. **Revelation 5:11–12 helps with the full picture: ¹¹Then 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. ¹²In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”**
- “7 blazing lamps” - **Revelation 4:5 - ⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.** Seven spirits of God a very difficult concept to interpret until you remember that apocalyptic literature uses numbers symbolically. John uses the #7 like crazy in Revelation. It is the number of God, the number of fullness, of completion, of perfection. So many interpret the seven spirits of God as the Holy Spirit Himself in all of His Fullness. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters at Creation in Genesis 1, so the Holy Spirit of God is here in fullness in front of the throne.
- “what looked like a sea of glass” - Look at 4:6 - **⁶Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.** Often the “sea” for a first century Jew like John receiving this vision, equated the sea to chaos, trouble, churning, to disorder. Here

a sea like glass – is a metaphor for perfectly stillness, calmness, perfect order. The throne of God is never chaotic. There is complete order and peace around the Throne!

- “4 living creatures covered with eyes” - 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 his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”** I believe these images are describing another of the angelic, heavenly beings – beings that Isaiah also had a glimpse of in Isaiah 6. Eyes for the Jews are metaphors of omniscience! And so they cry out: **Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”** This is a tremendous, indescribable scene!
- Into chapter 5 – John then sees a **“scroll in God’s right hand”**. **Revelation 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”**. Most papyrus scrolls in John’s day would be written on one side. Here the scroll is written on both sides. This scroll represents the fullness of God’s sovereign will and plan for humanity – for planet earth! On it is written all His decrees of judgment that are about to be poured out. His plan for all that is to come. God’s will and decrees always flow from His character. Even in our world, the policies and laws and direction of governments, of Prime Ministers, of Presidents all flow out of the character and the values of those governments and leaders. Here we can be assured that what is written on the scroll in the right hand of God comes from the absolutely holy, just, merciful and righteous character of God. This is important to remember when we see some of the judgments that are to come.
- **But** no one is found worthy to open the scroll. It is kind of the emotional climax to this whole scene for John. It becomes too much for him.... **5:2–5 - ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” 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.**
- But then the scene rapidly changes...

- 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.”**
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah. The Root (Heir) of David. (Messianic titles)
- Then 5:6–7 - ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.
- The Lamb! Slain lamb. JESUS! But notice where the lamb is. It is “standing in the center of the throne – encircled by the four living creatures and the elders”! Woah! Jesus comes forth to open the scroll from the very center of the throne! He doesn’t come from the outside in, He comes from the inside! The Lamb as the only one worthy! Again, this scene fuels worship! Jesus the Lamb who was slain, brings all of Heaven to a stand still and every creature bows before Him!! The Lion is the lamb and the lamb is slain!
- What a vision John is given! What does this awesome vision of God’s throne mean for us today? It would have brought assurance and comfort to John and the early church’s through all that they were going through under Rome – does this vision still speak?

2. But what does it mean?

- It means that worship is the reason for our existence! We exist to declare the everlasting worth of God! - **4 Vs. 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.”** Why do you and I even exist? What is the purpose of our lives? To declare with our lives the absolute worth and glory of God! We have our being in the very will of God. No wonder when God is rejected, when God is erased, when God is removed – no wonder people struggle with deep feelings of hopelessness, purposelessness, and insignificance. To know and love and worship God is our very existence!
- **It means that all of the events and the judgments of God to come all flow from the sovereign, majestic, kingly rule of God!** In our minds, we need to anchor human history

to the Sovereignty of God. We need to anchor current world events to the Sovereignty of God. We need to anchor 2017 in the sovereignty of God. We need to anchor the new president down south in the sovereignty of God! We need to anchor the ministries of our Church to the Sovereignty of God. You need to anchor your life to the sovereignty of God. Is it? Is it anchored there? In him you have an anchor that can keep your soul, steadfast and sure while the billows roll! This Throne Room vision means that everything to come – all flow from the rule of God! What else does this vision mean?

- **It means the world is not spinning out of control!** God has a plan! There is a scroll in his right hand. A script and He's ultimately writing it! How that all works together – divine sovereignty and human free will is mysterious – even unexplainable. But one thing Revelation makes very clear –and we will see it - in the end Jesus wins!
- **It means that Jesus is God!** I am aware of Bible scholars who declare crazy things like “Jesus never claimed to be God – or “the divinity of Jesus was a doctrine the Church attached later to Jesus at later Church Councils”. Hog wash! Here in a late first century document Jesus is rises up from the very center of the throne of God! He doesn't come into the throne room as a mere human from the outside. No – He's already there at the center! Jesus is categorically unique! Fully human and fully Divine and the only one able to open the scroll of God!
- **It means Jesus as THE Saviour of humanity – not a Saviour!** 5:9 - ⁹ **And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation”.** Jesus is the only way we can be saved. No other name. No other worthy. No other savior. This is why we are an evangelical Church! We need to get this word out! This is not news to keep to ourselves.
- Finally, this vision means we've been given a kingdom of service – a kingdom to look like Jesus. ¹⁰ **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”**

We've been ransomed by Jesus from our sin but to a purpose! The Kingdom of Christ will look like Christ. It will be a kingdom of sacrifice and service. By showing Jesus as the sacrificial lamb (and not, for instance, as the King of Kings), John is pointing to Old

Testament prophecies about the Messiah who would die for his enemies. It highlights the fact that Jesus's death wasn't his defeat, but rather his conquest over evil. When you and I die to self and serve humanity in the name of Jesus, we overcome evil!

The lamb conquered his enemies by loving them and dying for them. In the same way, God's kingdom will be revealed when the nations see the church – Jesus' followers - imitating the loving sacrifice of the Lamb. Not by killing its enemies, but by dying for them.

- These are some of the meanings we can take away from this Throne Room scene from Rev. 4-5. **Which one of these impacts you most today?**
- Allow it to work in you all week.