

Revelation 4.1-11

“A Gaze into Glory”

Elementary School > Dad had Shop 1st Shopping Mall in our City in California
 Another Business > PET SHOP > Dog Grooming in Open Area seen by Passersby
 NEW UNDERSTANDING of Mysteries in God’s World > esp. Realm of SOUND
 Friends & I Discovered DOG WHISTLE > Sat near Grooming Area & Blew Hard
 HEARD NOTHING > No one Knew > But the DOG’S HEARD and AGONIZED
 Several POODLES got CLOSE SHAVE that Summer > We got Banned from Mall

Apostle John > Enters Realm of SOUND & SIGHT > beyond Human Ears & Eyes
 Church at Laodicea told > Christ is KNOCKING at their Door
 Now Apostle John INVITED by Christ > Enter Door into Throne Room of God

1. Changes in Interpretation 2. Celebration for Eternity 3. Commitment to Adoration

1. Changes in Interpretation

a. Scene > chs 2 & 3 on EARTH > 7 Churches in Roman Asia > Modern Turkey

v. 1 “a door standing open in heaven” > Vantage Point of Remainder of Book

BOOK MOVES toward Greater NEARNESS and UNDERSTANDING of God
 “Then *God's temple* in heaven was opened...” Revelation 11.19
 “I saw *heaven* standing open...” Revelation 19.11

NEW Scene // Go to Airport > Raises many DISCONERTING QUESTIONS
 Flying to Moscow > Gate 7 > Are you Sure? Not Beijing? Bishkek? or Bangkok?
 Baggage > Last seen Conveyor Belt > Down Chute > Will it Reappear in Moscow?
 Workers going in MANY DIRECTIONS > Do they know where they’re Going?
 High atop Airport> CONTROL TOWER> The Powerful Direct Men & Machines

“The churches of Asia were small and struggling; the might of Rome was
 inexhaustible. What could a few defenseless Christians do if an imperial edict were
 to banish them from the face of the earth? Already the powers of darkness seemed
 to be closing in on them. The hearts of Christians began to tremble like the trees of
 the forest in the wind. Yet they have no need to fear. At the center of the universe
 is a throne. From it the wheeling planets receive their orders. To it gigantic
 galaxies give their allegiance. In it the tiniest living organism finds life. Before it
 angels and men and all created things in heaven above and earth beneath bow
 down and humbly worship. The Lord God omnipotent reigns!” John Stott

b. Situation v. 2 “At once I was in the Spirit”

“Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” Amos 3.7

1.10 “On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice”

VISION > and MORE > PROFOUND EXPERIENCE > Ecstatic State
Taken beyond Comprehension of NATURAL SENSES of Sound, Sight, Touch

Yuri Gagarin > Being in Space brings No Closer to God > “I did NOT SEE GOD”
If cannot SEE GOD while on Earth > BLINDED to Him when in OUTER SPACE

As he STARRED in ROCK CONCERT > Deacon Stephen said: "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Acts 7.56
NOT SPEC at END of Galaxies > Jesus NEAR > Standing, Welcoming him Home

VOICE > in Chapter 1 > JESUS HIMSELF > Jesus calls John to the Door
v. 1 “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."

Vision NOT PHOTOGRAPH > Not Literal Throne in Heaven, 24 thrones round It
NOT Lamb in Sky with 7 Horns and 7 Eyes > ABSURD IDEA!

JESUS IS THE DOOR > through Him we See God > Know God's Purpose & Plan

"No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Matthew 11.27

c. Style > from ch. 4 Book becomes more Colorful and more Confusing

LETTERS to 7 Churches > Few Mysteries: Nicolaitans, Jezebel, white stone...
But MOSTLY STRAIGHTFORWARD Message > Learn more as Learn Context

BEYOND OUR NORMAL EXPERIENCE to See a Person with:
v. 3 “the appearance of jasper and carnelian” > probably would call the Doctor

Call POLICE and Report Seeing: v. 8 “creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings”

THEY WILL THINK > you are FILLED WITH SPIRITS > not “in the Spirit”

Literary Genre > Closest Resemblance: APOCALYPTIC > Not Exactly

Many Newspapers in America Today > Cartoons with Donkeys & Elephants
 Visitor to USA > Donkeys & Elephants?? > Strange, Meaningless Symbols
 This Tuesday Americans Choose a President > either Donkey or Elephant
 Animals Represent 2 Major Political Parties > Democrat & Republican

Dangerous Question: ‘Do you believe Bible – Revelation – LITERALLY?’

“Some people come to Revelation with the recipe, ‘*Interpret everything literally if possible.*’ That recipe misunderstands what kind of book Revelation is. Of course, John literally saw what he says he saw. But what he saw was a vision. It was filled with symbols...People living in John’s own time understood this matter instinctively, they recognized that John was writing in an ‘apocalyptic’ manner, a manner as familiar to them as a political cartoon is to us today.” Vern Poythress

d. Certainty > chs 2 & 3 > Concrete, Definite > ‘Ephesus’ > See its Ruins Today

v. 1 “door standing open in heaven” > What or Where is Heaven??

1. Area where the birds fly.
2. Area where the stars shine.
3. Perfect place that exists alongside our imperfect world.
4. Perfect place that will exist when our world ends.
5. Spiritual reality where good and evil are seen for what they really are.

CHOICE # 5 // Paul’s concept of “the heavenlies” in letter to Ephesians

Some interpret Revelation with Great Certainty: ex. Meaning of 144,000

$3 = \text{God} / 4 = \text{Creation} > 3 \times 4 = \text{Church} > 12^2 = 144 = \text{Whole Church}$

$10 = \text{Completeness} > 10^3 = 1000 = \text{Three-Dimensional Completeness}$

$12^2 \times 10^3 = 144,000 = \text{Whole Church in all its Completeness}$

Such Interpretation Requires EXPERTISE in Bible & Mathematics > Have Neither!

BLESSING “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it” Revelation 1.3

PROMISE to Scholars and Simple > Know Bible or Never before Heard Bible

BE CAREFUL > Numbers DO MATTER in Historical Sections of Scripture

12 Tribes of Israel meant 12! Peter denied Jesus 3 times – count them 3!

Revelation > Unique Literature > Numbers SYMBOLS not just STATISTICS

v. 4 “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders.”

24 Exalted Angels > Serve and Adore God > but Angels are not REDEEMED
 Symbolic of Church in Totality > 12 OT Patriarchs and 12 NT Apostles
 // 24 Priest of Aaron who Constantly Served in Solomon’s Temple
 24 Priests = ONE for EACH HOUR of Day > Endless Worship of Great God

Which ONE is RIGHT?? > Sometimes the best answer in Revelation is YES!
 If it is Faithful to Scripture > Honoring to God > It’s ALL GOOD!

e. Sequence 2 & 3 > Jesus message to 1st Century Churches & all thru Centuries

v. 1 “After this I looked” Some Teachers > Jump from 1st Century to Last Century

Greek word “looked” or “saw” 45 times in Book / 5 X’s + ‘after these things’
 NOT Reference to Time Sequence > Order of Appearance
 God KNOWS Everything AT ONCE > But John Could Not > Neither Can We

Letter to 7 Struggling 1st C. Churches > Lift Up Your Heads, Redemption is Near!
 THRONE in Heaven > Not Caesar’s > Not Vacant > SOMEONE Sitting on It!

Real Question – Is Jesus Reigning Now? > Is He KING or Just COMING KING?

Revelation 1 > Vision of Jesus, Exalted, Glorious, Almighty, Sovereign, God-man
 Elements of Victorious Vision > Spoken by Jesus to Seven 1st Century Churches

2.8 “him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again”

2.18 “the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like
 burnished bronze”

3.7 “him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David”

RISEN JESUS is RULING JESUS > Hope for Church of 1st Cent. & Final Century

“The visions...all reveal the past, present, and future realities of two realms of
 human existence—New Jerusalem and Fallen Babylon...like Jesus’ parable of the
 wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13), they exist throughout history as mutually
 hostile—New Jerusalem experiencing tribulation at the hands of Fallen Babylon,
 Fallen Babylon experiencing radical disruption at the presence of New Jerusalem
 in its midst.”
 M. Robert Mulholland, Jr

2. Celebration for Eternity

a. Someone Jewish Reserve > Being of God Remains Undescribed > Mysterious

v. 2 “a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it”

“God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 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.” 1 Timothy 6.15,16

Little Boy > Busy Drawing Picture in Class > Teacher: “What are you drawing?”

Boy: “God” / Teacher: “But no one knows what God looks like?”

Boy: “When I am finished with this picture they will.”

“Human analogies are inadequate to describe the full wonder of the scene the Apostle was privileged to gaze; they are but finite pointers to an infinite reality.”

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

1) Prominent > Center of Heaven and Center of Attention

v. 4 “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders.”

v. 6 “In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures”

24 Elders Crowned as Overcomers > Give Crowns to Him who Overcame
All the Glory of their Victory is Rightly Ascribed to their God and Redeemer

v. 11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power”

“Worthy...to receive the glory and the honor and the power”

Definite Article before each Nouns means Totality > ALL Glory, Honor, & Power

“When God’s people are beset by temptations or persecution, a revelation of God’s character and glory is the best remedy...The blood of the Lamb demonstrates that solid redemption has already been accomplished.” Vern Poythress

2) Priesthood v. 3 “one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian”

Stones on Breastplate of Jewish Priest > Entered Most Holy Place to Serve God
Last > Jasper & First Carnelian > Covenant Finalized in Christ > Old made New

Song that Isaiah heard in Temple: v. 8 “Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’”

3) Power v. 8 “the Lord God Almighty”

Roman Emperor Domitian daringly demanded to be called “Lord and God”
Jesus is “Lord God Almighty” > King of all Feeble and Foolish Kings

to Create > v. 11 “for you created all things”

“How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”
Psalm 104.24

v. 3 “A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.”

RAINBOW > God’s Peace Sign to Noah’s Descendants > Circle Complete Peace
Justified by Faith > Peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ

to Control > v. 11 “by your will they were created and have their being”

“God, they are saying, in bringing all things into existence did so by his will, and providentially sustains all things by his will, and also brings all things to their predestined consummation by his will.”
Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

Redemption connects Beginning to Completion > All One in & with Christ Jesus

b. Setting > Throne Room // Earthly Temple of Israel > Heavenly Archetype

Throne > Word used 14 X’s in Chapter > 47 X’s in Book > Seat of Sovereign Rule
All SUPPORTING CAST > ENHANCE the GLORY of the one on the THRONE

v. 5 “From 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-fold Spirit > John’s Name for the Perfect, Complete Holy Spirit
Title ‘Holy Spirit’ never used in Book of Revelation

Lamps > Like the Ever-burning Candle Stand in the Old Covenant House of God

Lightning > Like what burst upon Mt. Sinai as God made Covenant with Israel
CHURCH > BAPTIZED in Holy Spirit & FIRE > God’s Cleansing and Comfort

v. 6 “before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal”

“...God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.” Exodus 24.10

Picture of IMMENSE DISTANCE and SERENITY

c. Servants “A large population is a king's glory” Proverbs 14.28

v. 4 “twenty-four elders”

vs. 6-8 “In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 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. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings.”

Creatures Compare with Throne Room Scenes > Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
(see “Throne Scenes” in Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 & 10, Daniel 7)

John describes UNKNOWN by the KNOWN > Familiar Images of OT Scripture
John freely TRANSFORMS OT images > Blends Them > Creates New Images

Cherubim > NOT Fat Faced Babies Selling Soap > Mighty Warriors of King

“the mightiest among the birds is the EAGLE, the mightiest among the domestic animals is the BULL, mightiest among the wild beasts is the LION, mightiest among all is MAN”
Saying of the Jewish Rabbis

MANY EYES > Ceaseless Vigilance >> SIX WINGS > SWIFT in His Service

“Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Revelation 5.13

3. Commitment to Adoration

a. Confidence v. 11 “you created all things, and by your will they were created”

Doctrine of Creation > MORE than just ABSTRACT THEORY to God’s People

Creation is Intimately & Inseparably linked with God > Good because He is Good
 God's People are to be Stewards of Creation > TREASURE not a TRASH PILE

Creation is not God, nor is God confined within Creation > God's Footstool

Truth of God as Creator > Source of Hope and Strength of God's People
 Children of Israel > Left many gods of Egypt > Meeting many gods of Canaan
 Who is God? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" Genesis 1.1

Nation of Judah > Soon to be crushed by Mighty Babylon > Who is God?
 "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. "Lift
 your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the
 starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power
 and mighty strength, not one of them is missing." Isaiah 40.25,26

Early Christians > Hated by the Jews > Persecuted by the Romans > Who is God?
 "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and
 everything in them...Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to
 speak your word with great boldness." Acts 4.24-29

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to
 their faithful Creator and continue to do good." 1 Peter 4.19

"God has not abandoned the world, and it is indeed his world. He made all things
 and made them for his own purpose. John's readers must not think that evil is in
 control. Evil is real. But the divine purpose still stands." Leon Morris

b. Calling v. 9 "*Whenever* the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks"

Ceaseless Worship > Worship NOT Only Activity > But Constant Disposition
 Heaven will be more than PLAYING HARPS or DOMBRAS or KAZOOS
 Every Action expresses their Adoration > Praise is in Hearts and on Lips

People > Fully Conformed to Divine Image & Destiny of God's Creation
 Wonderful Potential > Human Nature is Complete, One with Creator and His Will

v. 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"

FALL DOWN > acknowledgment of God as God

Possible to CONFORM OUTWARDLY > But be INWARDLY DEFIANT
Teenagers > I am only in Church because my parents FORCED ME TO COME!

PARENTS > Good for You! Force Kids to Hose off their Armpits > Clean up
Hazardous Waste Dump called Bedroom > Forced to Worship the Living God

Little Boy insisted on STANDING on CHAIR > Mother finally WON > Sat Down
Boy: "Mom, even tho I am sitting on this chair, in my heart I am standing on it!"

GOD is SMART ENOUGH to know what's in our HEART > Defiance or Delight!

Fall Down...and WORSHIP > POSTURE & PASSION > Ritual & Relationship
Revelation 4 is Template for what should happen every Sunday...every Day!

WORSHIP IS AWE > WONDER > ADORATION

"The world will never starve for want of wonders, but only for want of wonder."
G.K. Chesterton

People stand in LINE for Hours to get Hurried Tour of BUCKINGHAM PALACE
For a few minutes Glance at the Queens Quarters hundreds Sacrifice a Whole Day

Too BUSY to Dream of Heaven > No Time for God > Too many Malls!! Dogs!!

Fall Down...Worship...and CAST CROWNS > Authority, Rule, Control
Radical Abandonment of Ourselves to God -- Casting the Crown > Transformation

"Most high, most excellent, most potent, most omnipotent, most piteous and most
just; most hidden and most near; most beauteous and most strong; stable, yet
contained of none; unchangeable, yet changing all things; never new, never old;
making all things new, yet bringing old age upon the proud and they know it not;
always working, yet ever at rest; gathering, yet needing nothing; sustaining,
pervading, and protecting; creating, nourishing, and developing; seeking, and yet
possessing all things."
Bishop Augustine, 5th Century

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 carnelian. A rainbow, resembling 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. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also before 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. 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."

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."