

Wednesday Evening Bible Study
The Book of Revelation
Lesson 10
4: 1-11

- Chapter 4 is a pivotal point in the book of Revelation
 - Chapters 1-3 focused on the 7 churches of Asia (literally) and the church throughout history (symbolically).
 - Although we can see this we are not limited to churches for that specific time period
 - Remember, these churches were literal places, with the real problems identified by Jesus. However, each of these churches, and their problems, are also symbolic of a definite era within the history of the church
 - For example: Laodicea corresponds chronologically and spiritually with most churches in our day and time
- But now, a big change is seen in the text, so before we go any farther, let me give you a brief outline for the remainder of the book . . .
 - **Chapter 4-5**, however, are John's vision of the "throne room of heaven"
 - **Chapters 6-19** focus on the events of the Great Tribulation
 - **Chapters 20** reveals the binding of Satan, the millennial reign of Christ, Satan's final rebellion and defeat, and the Great White Throne Judgement
 - **Chapters 21-22** conclude the book by describing the establishment of the "New Jerusalem" and the eternal reign of Christ, and His bride (the church) over all the earth
 - **Chapters 1-3** covered the history of the church, from it's inception through the missionary work of the Apostles, to it's decline and eventual removal from the world
 - **Chapter 4** begins to reveal that which is to come, it focuses on the future. The remainder of the book of Revelation will reveal things that "are to come" in the future
- What has happened to the church?
 - We find no references to the church again until we reach chapter 19 (re: the "great multitude")
- Next week, I am going to devote the entire study to this issue of the Rapture, but for tonight, please just remember the following
- When the Rapture occurs . . .
 - All Christians, **who are alive**, will be "caught up" and taken to heaven (they will not experience physical death)
 - All Christians **who "sleep"** (physically dead) will see their bodies resurrected (though their spirit's already reside in heaven, their bodies shall join them there)
 - All Christian **influence** will be removed from the earth (physical and spiritual influence – with the exception of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will point Jews to Jesus!)
- This is a tremendously important doctrine, and I want to spend extensive time exploring and examining the Bible's teachings concerning the rapture NEXT Wednesday
- TRANS: But tonight, let's examine chapter 4 and seek to understand the identity and the activity of those who are in "the throne room of heaven"

1) Identity of those in the “throne room of heaven”

- a) v. 1, we find 2 people that need identifying
 - 1) “After these things I looked ...” this is **John**
 - 2) “And the first voice which I heard ...” this is **Christ**
 - 3) **Ezek. 1:1—“Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.**
- b) v. 2, “immediately I was in the Spirit”...This is **John**
 - 1) “and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne”...This is **God**
- c) v. 3, description of the “One (who) sat on the throne”
 - 1) This is a description of the 12 tribes of Israel originally given in Exodus 28:17-21—**“You shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; 18 and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; 19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. 21 “The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes.**
 - 2) Each tribe was assigned a stone to represent them
 - 3) These are the stones that God told the priests to upon their breastplates for these stone represented the first tribe of Israel, Reuben, the last tribe of Israel, Benjamin, and all the tribes in between
 - 4) The rainbow symbolizes the acceptance of all God’s children from every tribe and nation
 - 5) We’ll see more of this later in this chapter
- d) v. 4, “Around the thrones were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders” (They are NOT angels, nor are they spirits)
 - 1) W. A. Criswell calls them, “the redeemed of God” and the number 24 is significant for it reminds us of “who” the “redeemed of God” really are
 - 2) We can identify them because of their number and their adornment . . .
 - 3) The number 24 is very symbolic and represents 2 groups of 12
 - (1) 12 tribes of **Israel**, the “redeemed of God” prior to the coming of Christ
 - (2) 12 **apostles of the church**, the “redeemed of God” after the coming of Christ, or the church
 - 4) Remember, when you see the number 12 in Revelation, it is always a reference to the elective purpose of God in the life of man.
 - 5) This is why God chose the 12 tribes of Israel, and the 12 Apostles.
 - 6) And now we see it represents all men who have become the children of God
 - 7) Once raptured, the church takes its place among the 24 elders in the throne room of Heaven
 - 8) Now notice what the 24 elders are wearing, “clothed in white robes and they had crowns of gold upon their heads”
 - 9) We have already seen these images mentioned in the letters to the 7 churches
 - 10) Jesus promised those in Laodicea that they would be clothed in “white garments” if they would be faithful and true to Christ, and not compromise

- 11) Jesus promised those in Smyrna (the persecuted church), “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
- 12) The Greek language refers to 2 kinds of crown, “diadem” and “stephanos”
- 13) The “diadem” is the crown of a ruling king or government official
- 14) The “stephanos” is a crown given when someone wins a victory in a sporting event, and was usually made of leaves
- 15) The crown in this passage is a “stephanos” and represents the victory we have over sin and death!
- 16) So we already know that those who are clothed in white and wearing crowns are those who have maintained their faith in Christ in the face of persecution and compromise
- e) v. 5, Self-explanatory, these “seven lamps of fire” are the “seven spirits of God”
 - 1) We saw this statement in 3:1, as Jesus spoke to the church at Sardis. This is NOT imply that God has 7 Spirits, for there is only 1 Holy Spirit.
 - 2) The emphasis should be on the number, 7 symbolizes completion/perfection. Therefore, we see that Spirit is in Heaven and no longer upon the earth. This again gives support to the pre-tribulation view of the rapture that we adhere to as Baptists
- f) v. 6, “around the throne, were four living creatures”
- g) v. 6-8 describe these “living creatures”
 - 1) Remember, the number 4 symbolizes that which God has created
 - 2) Just as there are 4 seasons, 4 points to the compass, 4 winds, . . . there are 4 living creatures in heaven
 - 3) In the Old Testament, we see these living creatures referred to as “cherubim”
 - 4) They are described in Ezekiel and Isaiah, and we are told that the original tabernacle in the wilderness had pictures of cherubim embroidered on the curtains
 - 5) Genesis 3:24 tells us, “So He (God) drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”
 - 6) John describes these living creatures in the following way, and Jewish tradition tells us that God’s created order is represented in the faces of the cherubim
 - 7) “the first living creature was like a lion”
 - (1) The greatest of all the **wild** creatures
 - 8) “the second living creature was like a calf”
 - (1) The greatest of all the **domesticated** creatures
 - 9) “the third living creature had a face like a man”
 - (1) The greatest of all **creation**
 - 10) “the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle”
 - (1) The greatest of all the **flying** creatures
 - 11) Therefore, all of creation is involved in worshipping the Creator in Heaven!
 - 12) Another interpretation suggests that this is really a four-fold description of God. But the emphasis upon this interpretation is more upon what the creature have in common, the eyes and wings” then in how they differ.
 - 13) This 2nd interpretation says that the “six wings” represent the omnipresence of God and that the “eyes” represent the omniscience of God (all knowing)

2) Activity of those in the “throne room of heaven”

- a) Have you ever wondered what you and I will do in heaven?
- b) v. 8-11 tells us that we will be . . .
 - 1) Praising God (read v. 8b and v. 11)
 - 2) Praising God continually “And they do not rest day or night”
- c) Have you ever been in a worship service, a revival meeting, a prayer meeting when the Spirit of God seemed to just “break loose”?
- d) I’ve been in some precious meetings when it seemed as if God were all around you! But these moments have always been fleeting, only for a moment, only temporary.
- e) But God has made a promise to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, that a day is soon coming when we can share in that kind of experience and relationship with Him for all eternity!
- f) Imagine that feeling/experience never ending . . . that’s the picture we have what you and I will be doing in heaven.
- g) Criswell writes, “What ultimate blessedness and glory the Lord has purposes for His people! Until then, precious beyond compare it is to call on His name now, to love Him now, to trust in Jesus now. That is our appeal and invitation to your heart.”