

All Things New: *The Throne in Heaven – Revelation 4*

1. “How are we all doing?” (*High, Low & Buffalo*)

- i. High – What was a high point in your week? What was good or went well?
- ii. Low – What was a low point in your week? What was a challenge, disappointment, or struggle?
- iii. Buffalo – What was something else that happened this week? It can be anything – interesting, random, weird, surprising, or completely normal!

2. “Before we talk about chapter 4, can someone read this paragraph?”

Buckle up folks! The next 19 chapters of Revelation are very different from the first 3 chapters. There will be images we find unfamiliar or even unsettling but remember Jesus’ words: “Don’t be afraid” (1:17). If we end our discussion afraid of the world or fearful of the future, we’ve missed the point!

How will we know if we’ve ended our discussion on a fearful note? What will we do if that happens?

3. “Can someone else read the next section?”

These next chapters are difficult to understand, which makes it tempting to speculate: who is the Antichrist? When *exactly* is Jesus coming back? Are credit cards really the Mark of the Beast?¹ These questions make for a spirited debate, but they miss the point of Revelation. Chapters 4 through 22 have the same purpose as chapters 1 through 3. Because of this, we need to keep asking the same questions:

- **Where do we see Jesus?** Remember, Revelation is a ‘revealing’ of Jesus by Jesus *about* Jesus (1:1).
- **How is this connected to the Old Testament?** Much of what is strange to us was clear to the original listeners *because* they understood the Old Testament.
- **How will this impact our lives: our words, actions, and beliefs?** The point of Revelation was that the listeners would ‘take to heart’ what they hear and be different as a result (1:3 & 22:7).

It is tempting to spend most of our time trying to figure out what everything means! What will we do as a group if we realize we’ve started to speculate?

¹ This was a common concern a few years ago.

4. “Thanks everyone! Let’s keep that in mind as we keep going. The book of Revelation was meant to be read out loud. Can one or two people read Revelation 4? Try to read a little *slower* than usual. For the rest of us, try to imagine what John saw as we listen. Can we “see” what we hear?”

5. “Chapter 4 pulls back the curtain to show ‘what must take place after this’ and the most important thing is shown first: there is someone on the throne in Heaven.

Let’s look again at chapter 4. How is everything else described in relation to the throne?”

6. “Revelation is closely connected to the Old Testament. Can someone read Isaiah 6:1-4? Then, can someone else read Ezekiel 1:4-6 and 1:22-28?”

What similarities and differences do we notice between these verses and Revelation 4?

7. “Seeing God was the foundation for both Isaiah’s and Ezekiel’s ministry. Revelation 4 is our foundation for our future. It is the ‘glasses’ we wear as we read the rest of Revelation. It shows us that God has ultimate authority (the throne), will keep His promises (the rainbow), has conquered chaos (the ‘sea like glass,’ Ps. 89:8-9), welcomes the redeemed people of God (the 24 elders = 12 tribes of Israel + 12 apostles of Jesus), and rules all creation (the 4 creatures).²”

Which image sticks out most to you? Which is most comforting? Most unsettling?

Optional: Break into smaller groups for this section

8. “What we ‘see’ in Revelation is meant to change what we do, say, and believe.”

- a. What do you usually do when you feel worried, panicked, or nervous about the future?
- b. Take a moment to think: who or what do you believe has the power to fix your life, the world, and the future? (Aim for an *honest* answer, not the ‘right’ answer.)
- c. How could ‘seeing’ the throne change your week? Perhaps your feelings (e.g. fear/hope), your beliefs (e.g. how to fix problems), your words (e.g. how you pray), or your actions (e.g. your stress responses)?

9. “Thanks for sharing _____. Can I pray for you?” Take time to pray for each other

10. “Thanks everyone! Same time next week? Who will lead / host / bring snack / etc.?”

² Darrel Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*