Revelation 4 – Get Real!

There is more to reality than we can perceive with our senses. In the first part of the Revelation John was shown the unveiled reality of Christ (Rev. 1:12-20). In the second section Christ drew back the curtain on his church to show their true state as light bearers. In chapters 4-5 John is invited to see the reality of heaven itself and what actually takes place when Christians worship. We worship with a conviction that we are in the presence of God, but here is what an unveiled view of worship looks like.

Warm Up Question(s) – choose one

- What was a significant worship experience you have had, and what made it so special?
- What is the most memorable storm you have ever been in?

Discovering the Word – Before trying to "decode" every part of the scene of chapter 4, as the chapter is read simply try to imagine what can be seen and heard and be prepared to share some of your initial impressions of what you see & hear and how you think John felt taking this all in.

1) **Read Revelation 4.** Suppose you were trying to stage this for a dramatic presentation, how would you describe this scene to a potential director or cast. (e.g. setting, characters, colours, backdrop, mood)?

2) John saw before him "a door standing open in heaven" (v.1). Commentator Darrell Johnson suggests that for John "heaven" refers not to a place but "to another dimension of reality this is right here, close at hand, all around us" and that "Christ pulls back the curtain, opens the door and gives John a picture to help him understand what is going on right now in that other dimension."[1] Why would this be important for John and the churches and us to see this reality?

3) Describe the one on the throne and what it tells us about him. How does this compare or contrast to who or what people said was (and say is) at the control centre of the universe?

4) How many other thrones are there in this scene? How can we determine whether this number is a statistic or a symbol?[2] What do the thrones and the people on them represent (i.e. what is their presence, their position, their clothing and their actions telling us)?

5) What is the visual and symbolic significance of the four living creatures?[3] How do the four creatures and the twenty-four elders respond to God's glory (vv. 8, 10-11)?

6) What do their words & actions of worship tell us about the object/focus of heavenly worship?

7) How can their actions/reactions help guide and inspire us in our worship?

8) How can a vision of heaven help us see life on earth more clearly?

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[1] Darrell Johnson, Discipleship On The Edge, p. 131.

[2] Look at how other numbers are being used so far in Revelation. Notice how twelves (or two pairs of twelve in this case) are used in scripture (e.g. twelve tribes of Israel, twelve disciples). Notice parallels in our own use of numbers in groupings and in symbolic ways (e.g. a dozen, a hundred, a million).

[3] Note how we still use language like, "the four corners of the earth" to refer to the whole earth. There was an old rabbinic saying that, "The mightiest among the birds is the eagle, the mightiest among the domestic animas is the bull, the mightiest among the wild beasts is the lion, and the mightiest among all is man" which still resonates in most cultures.