

# **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

## **Bible Study Notes**

### **5-16-18**

#### **Revelation 4**

This chapter is one of the most mysterious pieces of literature ever written in the history of mankind. I cannot think of anything more awesome than a true description of the place where God dwells and governs the earth from. This entire chapter is a picture of the Beautiful God of mercy exercising His sovereignty in fierce judgment. These are two realities that we often separate in our thinking. However, we are shown here that God reconciles these realities in perfect harmony as He governs the earth in the last days scenario.

#### **John's Invitation to Heaven - Verse 1**

**<sup>1</sup> 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."**

**4:1** Chapters 4 and 5 record glimpses into Christ's glory. Here we see into the throne room of heaven. God is on the throne and orchestrating all the events that John will record. The world is not spinning out of control; the God of creation will carry out his plans as Christ initiates the final battle with the forces of evil. John shows us heaven before showing us earth so that we will not be frightened by future events.

#### **After This**

John briefly mentions that this part of the vision (chapter 4) is distinct from what was previously seen in chapter 1. Chapter 1 had its direct implications on the churches of chapters 2 and 3 with secondary applications to us, but chapter 4 onwards addresses a different time frame. This part of the vision addresses a time frame yet future.

#### **I Looked**

This is the first emphasis of verse 1. This doesn't just mean that John saw things with his physical eye but that he was receiving revelation concerning what he saw. We can't limit what he saw to either only physical or only intuitively, it was both. John both saw what he recorded and also was given the intuitive understanding of it\_(revelation: spiritual understanding).

#### **A Door Opened in Heaven**

Not just a regular door, but a door in the sky that permits access to heaven. This door was a symbol of God's granting John permission to enter heaven. John was going to penetrate into the heavenly mysteries (Rom. 10.6; 2 Cor. 12.1-2). This door was the dividing line between the earthly realm and the heavenly realm. On just the other side of this door lie the open mysteries of heaven that John was going to witness with unveiled eyes.

## **The Sound of a Trumpet**

John heard Christ's voice blasting as a trumpet, as he did before (Rev. 1.10), inviting him into the heavenly realm. This voice was loud and full of authority.

## **The Voice's Invitation - "Come up here..."**

God gives John a command to receive revelation. John was given direct revelation as opposed to indirect revelation. Direct revelation is when God downloads revelation to you. He directly deposits it into your spirit. This is what happened here. God brought it to John.

## **And I will show you what must happen...**

These events *must* happen. God's judgments at the end of the age are predicted, not just probable. They will happen. This is what God has destined for the future. These events are irreversible, they cannot be stopped. God in His sovereignty has decreed that these events of judgment, wrath, mercy and deliverance take place. These events are the outworking of God's will. These prophecies are not given to satisfy our curiosity, but to remind us who is really in charge.

## **The Throne of God - Verses 2-4**

**<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup> 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.**

**4:2** Four times in the book of Revelation John says he was "in the Spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). This expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving him a vision—showing him situations and events he could not have seen with mere human eyesight. All true prophecy comes from God through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

**4:4** Who are these 24 elders? Because there were 12 tribes of Israel in the Old Testament and 12 apostles in the New Testament, the 24 elders in this vision probably represent all the redeemed of God for all time (both before and after Christ's death and resurrection). They symbolize all those—both Jews and Gentiles—who are now part of God's family. The 24 elders show us that all the redeemed of the Lord are worshiping him.

## **Activities Around the Throne - Verses 5-7**

**<sup>5</sup> From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits<sup>[a]</sup> of God. <sup>6</sup> Also in front of 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.**

This is one of the major focuses of chapter 4; that God is completely sovereign even in the midst of judgments being executed on the earth. At no point in time does God ever lose control. Even as the atmosphere on earth is hectic, chaotic, and totally lawless the Lord of heaven is still completely sovereign.

**4:5** In Revelation, lightning and thunder are connected with significant events in heaven. They remind us of the lightning and thunder at Mount Sinai when God gave the people his laws (Exodus 19:16). The Old Testament often uses such imagery to reflect God's power and majesty (Psalm 77:18).

**4:5** The "seven spirits of God" is another name for the Holy Spirit. See also Zechariah 4:2-6, where seven lamps (like the seven torches here) are equated with the one Spirit.

**4:6** Glass was very rare in New Testament times, and crystal-clear glass was virtually impossible to find (see 1 Corinthians 13:12). The "sea of glass" highlights both the magnificence and holiness of God.

**4:6-7** Just as the Holy Spirit is seen symbolically in the seven lighted lamps, so the "four living creatures" represent the attributes (the qualities and character) of God. These creatures were not real animals. Like the cherubim (the highest order of the angels), they guard God's throne, lead others in worship, and proclaim God's holiness. God's attributes symbolized in the animal-like appearance of these four creatures are majesty and power (the lion), faithfulness (the ox), intelligence (the human), and sovereignty (the eagle). The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel saw four similar creatures in one of his visions (Ezekiel 1:5-10).

### **The Throne in Heaven - Verses 8-11**

<sup>8</sup> Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," who was, and is, and is to come." <sup>9</sup> Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup> 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: <sup>11</sup> "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."

**4:9** John describes these scenes in such detail because Christians in the first century came from many backgrounds. Not all of them understood Jewish history or knew the glory of the temple. Revelation instructs us in worship. It shows us where, why, and how to praise God. Worship takes our minds off our problems and focuses them on God. Worship leads us from individual meditation to corporate worship. Worship causes us to consider and appreciate God's character. Worship lifts our perspective from the earthly to the heavenly.

**4:11** The point of this chapter is summed up in this verse: All creatures in heaven and earth will praise and honor God because he is the creator and sustainer of everything.