

Vision of the Heavenly Throne (Revelation 4:1-11)

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Introduction

1. Revelation is divided into two perspectives:
 - a. Visions from a *heavenly* angle (Ch. 1-9, 19, and 20)
 - b. Visions from an *earthly* angle (Ch. 10-15, 16-18, and 21, 22)
2. The heavenly perspective involves the heavenly temple in 4:1 (*cf* 11:19).
 - a. This vision is modeled after Daniel 7:9-14 and Ezekiel 1:26-28.
 - b. Although the temple is not specifically mentioned in chapters 4 and 5, this conclusion is supported by comparing it with Isaiah 6:1-4.
 - c. Other evidence lends support: (1) repetition of lightning and thunder, (2) seven lamps (v. 5), (3) golden altar of incense (8:3; 9:13; 16:7, see 6:9, 10, rooted in 4 and 5).
 - d. The significance of the temple involves John's call and commission to a prophetic ministry like Isaiah and Ezekiel.
3. The vision (4 and 5) relates to Christ's admonitions to the churches and to the promises made to the overcomers (2 and 3).
 - a. Jesus suffered in the flesh and overcame by resurrection power; so, the suffering churches will also overcome to rule with Christ above.
 - b. The saints may also take courage in the fact that the throne is now set and Christ is ruling over all (Ex. 19:6 as applied to the churches).

I. The Summons of John

1. The timing of the summons—“*after these things*”
 - a. Refers to Revelation 1:19 and reflects Daniel 2:44 and 45 (“*what shall be after this*”)
 - b. Announces not only what is contained in 4 and 5 but the visions of the rest of Revelation as well
 - c. The things spoken of are not just future but of the whole church age—past, present, and future.
2. The summons and the contrasting vision
 - a. The earthly scene (2, 3) was one of restless, troubled, imperfect, and apprehensive churches full of fears, faults, failings, and disloyalties.
 - b. The heavenly scene (4, 5) is one of perfect assurance and peace with not one ripple of alarm over earthly corruption, only perfect and infinite harmony of righteousness, power, and praise to the One who lives forever and ever.
3. The purpose of the summons—prophetic commissioning
 - a. In order to relate God's hidden agenda for the time between Christ's first and second advent

- b. Occurring in a timeless dimension where truth and reality are seen clearly, giving John prophetic authority
- c. There is nothing here to support the notion that John represents the pre-trib. rapture of the church.

II. The Throne Scene

1. The throne itself (see Dan. 7:9-11; Ezek. 1:26-28)
 - a. First mention (16 references in 4, 5)
 - b. All judgments (6-16) issue from this throne.
 - c. Purpose: to emphasize God's sovereignty over all human history both to redeem and to judge—in case anyone is tempted to compromise in times of suffering.
2. A description of the throne's appearance
 - a. Three precious stones (jasper, sardis, and emerald) signify God's glory (21:11; Psa. 104:2; 1 Tim. 6:16).
 - b. The emerald rainbow speaks of God's mercy for the persecuted (Gen. 9:12; Ezek. 1:28—suggest the beginnings of the new creation).
 - c. Lightning, rumbles, and peals of thunder signal God's judgments (8:5; 11:9; 16:18) for the persecutors.
 - d. The seven lamps of fire before the throne speak of the work of God's Spirit (5:6; 1:12, 20; Zech. 4:2-10).
 - e. The glassy sea (see 15:2) signifies overcoming and deliverance. It speaks of the reality of evil (13:1; Dan. 7:3), and its glassy appearance is contrasted to the surging and stormy seas of humanity under the control of the evil one (Psa. 46:1).
3. The courtiers—four living creatures and twenty-four elders
 - a. There are both similarities and differences in the descriptions of the heavenly entities (the four living creatures) in Ezekiel and Revelation.
 - b. The twenty-four elders clearly symbolize the earthly order of creation and represent the saints in glory.
 - c. The lack of detail argues for their symbolic nature.

III. The Song of the Saints

1. Two glorious examples of worship are given, one by the angelic representatives (v. 8; Isa. 6:3) and one by the earthly representatives (v. 11).
2. These hymns interpret the vision and demonstrate His worthiness to be praised and glorified.

Use

1. How do we look upon God's sovereign rule in a practical sense in our daily walk?
2. How do we regard those beings that John saw about the throne?
3. How important is worship?