

BEFORE THE THRONE - Rv 4:6b-8

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INTRODUCTION

1. Where are you right now? Hb 12:21-24 Faith, not fantasy - faith in truth revealed in Scripture.
2. Imagination & the IInd commandment - yet "sanctified imagination": a mental envisioning [not of God] but informed by Word of God: prophetic vision - Rv 4:1-11 - last LD v1-6a
3. What John sees is symbolic: God on throne = God's supreme sovereignty.

1st: The Throne-Centered Universe

1. Pre-Galileo: earth at the center [geocentric]; later the sun [heliocentric]. Now scientists tell us universe is expanding, w/o a center. John sees God-centered, theocentric reality: visible & invisible beneath *the throne*.
2. John 4-5 is not a map of heaven but a picture symbolizing truth of divine sovereignty, ultimate reign of God Most High.
3. Instructive, comforting & encourages us to overcome - Rv 3:21-22.

2nd: The Four Living Creatures - Rv 4:6b-8

1. Ezek - 4 living beings as *cherubs* [cherubim]. Guard way to tree of life. Most interp as angels assoc'd w/ God's throne: sovereignty over creation.
 - i. *archangel* - 1Thes 4:16; Jude 1:19 Michael; Gabriel
 - ii. Speculation re: hierarchy of angels. Assoc'd w/ throne.
2. Tabernacle patterned after heavenly temple = replica of creation & Holy of Holies reminiscent of Eden: garden/temple - God's ark: gov't - throne.
 - i. Ex 25 - 2 cherubs on mercy-seat on ark of cov: 10c; manna; Aaron's rod = annual propitiation: YHWH's throne [Ps 99:1; Isa 37:16]
 - ii. Exo 26 - curtains w/ cherubim woven on veil - Edenic trees, fruit
3. 1Kgs 6:29 - Solomon's temple - 2 cherubs recalls Eden
4. Ezek 1:1-2:1 4 *living beings* - sees what John sees, describes differently
 - i. Chpt 2-3, preach to apostate Israel; chpt 4-7 perform message of impending judgment; chpt 8-9 sees idolatry w/i temple!
 - ii. Chpt 10 glory of YHWH departs - we see *cherubim* - Ezek 10:8-22
 - iii. Cherub's wheels - a "chariot" for YHWH the warrior King.
5. Isa also saw heavenly throne - Isa 6:1-4 Seraphim. Are these the *living creatures* of Rv 4:8? Similar but differences in # of wings; position; appearances. Irenaeus assoc'd w/ 4 gospels
6. Altho identified w/ throne, 4 creatures bring creation into view. Symbolic # 4 => 4 corners of world; creatures are "representative of the whole created order of animate life" [Beale, 329].
 - i. Rv 5 the 4 creatures engage in heavenly worship
 - ii. Rv 6 summon horsemen to execute judgments
 - iii. Rv 7 another heavenly worship scene
 - iv. Rv 14 worship but not singing song of the redeemed

- v. Rv 15 they give bowls to angels to execute judgment;
- vi. Rv 19 - w/ 24 elders praising God for destruction of Babylon

7. Jn sees a vision of heaven w/ symbols of realities that tell us about our God.

- i. Ezek, Isa, Dan - see same truths
- ii. We're looking at transcendent realm beyond 5-senses
- iii. What is symbolized? The enthroned Lord is worthy to receive worship from the entirety of creation. Ps148

8. 7 churches are informed re: truth of God & reality of worship & witness

- i. Roman imperial cult of Domitian used symbols. The church is to remember the symbolic representations of Jesus' sovereignty.
- ii. In worship: we come before this throne. In witness, we are subject to this throne. Rv 4 Our God alone is worthy of worship - v11.