

## Revelation 4:4-11

### "A Contagious Kind Of Worship"

We've seen the past, spoken of the present; from Ch 4 forward the Lord shares the prophetic. We're entering into the exciting aspects of the book of Rev. Oh, don't get me wrong it's been great up to this point, but this begins the portion that really peaks our interest doesn't it? *What's happening in heaven, what's to come upon on the earth, how's it all coming down & in what way will it all wrap up? We get to peel back the veil (so to speak) & see into the spiritual, getting a glimpse of the otherwise unseen.*

What we've seen so far is that as soon as Jesus was finished speaking *to* & dealing w/the things that pertained to the church; John looked, & there it was... A door standing open in heaven; then he heard a voice, it was the 1<sup>st</sup> voice he heard back in Ch 1 (the voice of Jesus) & it resounded like a trumpet, there was authority, there was a clarity & the command was given specifically "Come up here & I will show you the things which must take place after this." *Immediately John was in the Spirit & before his eyes was the centerpiece of heaven... A throne, an occupied throne, & he sought to describe how it looked. He said (in essence), there was a brilliance, an effulgence, the outshining of God; like crystal (he says jasper, but we'll learn later that what he describes as jasper is probably more like unto our diamond), of course the bible tells us that God is light & in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).* So it makes sense that John would see this brilliant radiance shining forth from God's throne. He also saw a deep ruby red. The bible also tells us that God is love (1 John 2:8); so it's plausible that these colors that John is describing that are emanating from the throne are pointing to the holiness, the righteousness & purity of God mingled w/the redeeming love of God as seen in the shed blood of J.C.

*Then around the throne John sees this rainbow, it's not ½ a circle that's multicolored, it's full circle and it's a deep emerald green. This is the scene that John is snatched up into...he continues on in Vs 4.*

### Vs 4-5

So as we mentioned last time there is a storm brewing in heaven & it will be sent forth upon the earth from the throne of God. This is what distinguishes the tribulation that we all experience today from the "Great Tribulation", the time of Jacob's trouble that's to come upon the earth after the rapture of the church. *The things we experience today result from the world, our own flesh &/or satanic opposition. What's coming down upon the planet at this time (during the Great tribulation) comes very clearly from the throne of God Himself.*

It's His judgment upon a world, which has rejected His Son.

Now we note in Vs 4 that there's more than 1 throne in heaven, John sees here 24 lesser thrones around the centerpiece of heaven, the throne of God. He's careful to point out the fact that these thrones are *around* the throne, that is, they're all equal distance *from* the throne, none have a status that is more prevalent than the other.

He calls them elders, notes that they're clothed in white robes & that they're wearing crowns of gold upon their heads. Of course the question that we all want to know is "who are they, & why are they there"?

Well, I want to tell you very clearly & quite dogmatically, nobody knows! Now that's not to say that there's not speculation, there's more speculation than you can shake a stick at (what's the point of that phrase anyway? Why would I even want to shake a stick at anything? 😊) Be that as it may there are those who believe it may be angels, those who believe it may be the church, those who believe it may be the 12 patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. Or they could simply be some heavenly beings of which we know nothing about... Regardless of who they may be there are a couple of things we can be fairly safe about in our understanding of *why* they're there and *what* they do.

#1 I think we can rule out the fact of them being angels; for a # of reasons. We don't have any scriptural evidence that points to the fact that angels rule, they serve God & are sent to minister to His kids. We read in the book of Hebrews regarding angelic beings, "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*"<sup>1</sup> So angels aren't promised a place from which they will rule, nor do we see them crowned; later on we'll see these elders sing a song of redemption (in Ch 5) & angels have never been redeemed by the blood of J.C. however mankind has been.

So it seems safe to me to easily rule out the fact that these elders are angels. We also see them robed in white (which the bible declares is the result of the cleansing power of the blood of J.C. being imputed to us & in Ch 19 we'll see fine linen, bright & clean is the righteous acts of the saints.) Along w/that we see them wearing crowns, which the bible speaks of over & over again as the rewards that the righteous will receive at the judgment seat of Christ. The crowns spoken of here are the "stephanos" the victor's crowns, not the Diadem or the royal crown.

2 Final points on this & we'll move one.

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<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Heb 1:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

#1 the #24 seems significant in that as you read 1st Chron 24 you find the 24 courses of the priesthood & 24 course of Levites that David established & placed on a rotating schedule so that they could all minister in turn at the temple.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Chron 27 you find the military divisions & there was to be 24,000 on duty at all times rotating each month. So 24 divisions of priests & Levites & 24,000 soldiers, each order of the priests and Levites represented all of the other priests & Levites & the 24,000 soldiers on duty represented the entire army. Here's my point, it seems as though the #24 is the # of representation.

We also know #2 that elders stand to represent those whom they oversee, both in the nation of Israel & in the church. The word for "elders" here is the word "presbyteros" from which we get our word "Presbyterian". You've heard the joke about the little girl who's mom asked her after church what she learned in Sunday school? She said, "We learned that there are 24 Presbyterians in heaven." ☺

Here's my point: regardless of who these individuals are (it would make sense to me that they would be the 12 patriarchs & the 12 apostles but that's subject to debate); it seems clear that the stand to represent the redeemed of God.

You (child of God) will be robed in white, you'll be crowned w/crowns of gold, you will rule & reign as kings & priests unto your God. So these 24 elders represent all the redeemed who will stand in the presence of God. The bible declares that we are joint heirs w/Christ (Rom 8:17) & that if we endure we will also reign w/Him (2 Tim 2:12).

However, before we get caught up w/what we'll be there, I'd encourage you to emulate their example here... "What do ya mean?" These guys aren't tied down w/board meetings, they aren't running programs, they sit in God's presence, in Ch 5 we'll find them encouraging John's downcast heart, later still (Ch 7) we'll see an elder give John insight and understanding; we'll see them singing a new song & worshipping J.C.

So if it's in your heart to be an elder, a servant, a minister on the earth, be one who sits in the presence of God, who seek to bring healing to the hurting by pointing them to J.C. Be equipped in the word so as to bring insight & understanding to those who need it & be a person of praise, one who worships God; who falls on your face before the throne giving glory & honor, blessing & power to the One who lives forever & ever.

## Vs 5

John is certainly seeing both impressive & fearful sights to say the least...

Of course as we hear of these thunderings & lightnings before the throne of God we're mindful of the fact that a storm is coming; we're reminded of the scene at Mt. Sinai when God gave the law to Moses & this incredible scene descended upon the Mt; thundering & lightning, smoke as the smoke of a furnace covering the Mt as the Lord descended upon it in a fire & gave to Moses His holy law. **Now to those who've rejected His covenant of grace through J.C. God prepares to unleash the storm of His judgment... You see we only have 2 options, receive grace through J.C. or be held to the standard of God's holy law which none can keep.**

The law was meant to lead us *to* Christ, show us our need *for* Christ, but having rejected Christ the world is left under the law & having broken that law only judgment remains. The world doesn't like to think of God as a God of judgment. **They prefer to look at the rainbow *around* the throne and ignore the lightning and thunder that comes forth *from* the throne. It's true that God is a God of grace, but don't be deceived His grace (Rom. 5:21) reigns *through* righteousness. That's what we see at the cross where God manifested both His love for sinners and His wrath against sin.**

Burning *before* the throne John sees 7 lamps of fire which is a physical (spiritual) manifestation of the Person of the Holy Spirit who shines light upon who Jesus is & sets us on fire for Him. The Spirit refines us, purifies us, consumes the chaff from our lives that we might burn bright for Jesus.

#### Vs 6-8

**Notice again that everything John is seeing he's describing in relationship to the throne. God is the focal point; His throne is the centerpiece; but then all these things are happening in relationship *to* His throne.**

Before the throne is a sea of glass, like crystal. Is it literally glass, or does it *look like* glass? Again scholars are torn; it says glass, but I'm not sure its physical make up is to be the primary point of discussion...

**When God gave to Moses the blueprints for the tabernacle it was to be an earthly foreshadow of the heavenly substance, it was an earthly replica of the heavenly reality; & in between the altar & the tabernacle there was a bronze laver filled w/water & it was for the washing of the priests.**

There is purity before the throne of God. Today, you & I (Eph 5:26) are washed by the water of the word of God; God's word edifies, purifies & washes over our inner man. Jesus said we're made clean by the *word* that He has spoken.

As John continues to survey the scene his eyes are drawn to these 4 creatures in the midst and around the throne. They were full of eyes both in the front & the back and he saw 1 w/the face of a lion, another w/the face of (literally) an ox, the other had the face of a man & the final one that he saw had the face of an eagle. They also each had 6 wings full of eyes around & from w/in & to our imagination they sound almost grotesque, but trust me, when you behold them w/your eyes they will be both majestic & beautiful...

As we survey the scriptures we discover that what John was beholding was a certain class of angelic beings known as “Cherubim”. Leave Rev 4, turn back to the OT to the book of Ezekiel Ch 1 (Vs 4-10, 18).

So by this we can know that John & Ezekiel were seeing the same thing, simply from a bit of a different vantage point, John could see all 6 wings while Ezekiel only saw 4, but as to where John saw a single face, Ezekiel could see that they each have 4 faces, when John looked they were all facing a different direction so he saw 4 separate faces. When you get to Ezekiel Ch 10 it's there that we discover that they are Cherubim & in Ch 28 you discover that this is the same class of angel that Satan belonged to from which he fell; he's called the “anointed cherub who covers”.

Again as you study the tabernacle there were Cherubim woven into the tapestry & fashioned out of gold w/wings outstretched over the mercy seat (God's throne).

People speculate what the point is behind the 4 faces. Again it's speculation, no one knows for certain. Do they point to the excellence of animate creation in that the lion is the king of all wild animals, of the domesticated animals the ox is the most grand, of the birds of the air none compare to the eagle & of course the highest order of creation is man. (We hope no fish are offended 😊).

Could they point to the portraits of Jesus as painted in the gospels? Matt presenting Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Mark presenting Jesus as the humble servant (the ox), Luke presents Jesus as the Perfect Man, & John as the one who's come down from heaven in majesty & splendor (the eagle).

It's fun to speculate but at the end of the day that's all it is, speculation. What may be more important to realize is that they are full of eyes all over the front & the back, around & w/in their wings. I believe it's safe to say they aren't blind, they aren't mechanical, they see more clearly, have more insight, more knowledge & intelligence than you or I could ever dream of. Yet they live their existence to bring praise to God & give Him glory...

Listen, all failure to truly worship God is rooted in a lack of seeing & understanding Him for whom He truly is. The more clearly you see the more eager your heart will be to worship Him w/all that you are.

The more clearly you see the redeeming work of Jesus, the enormity of your sin and the holiness of God, His great love for you and how He's saved you, the less you'll be able to restrain your heart from worshiping Him.

Now worship isn't to be rash, it's to be reasonable right? Intelligent. Romans 12:1 tell us that our worship of God is reasonable.

These cherubim have no rest day or night (that's not to say they have unrest either, they're content in their continual employment) saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was & is & is to come!"

Couple things here; it's repeated 3xs I suspect because the Triune Godhead is in view. God the Father, God the Son, & God the Holy Spirit; there's also possibly some Hebrew overtones here. The way we emphasize something in English is through italics, underlining, bold type, raising & lowering our voice etc. In Hebrew you'll see it through repetition, if it's doubled "truly, truly" it's adding emphasis, if it's tripled it designates the superlative, the unmatched; calling attention to the infinite unmatched holiness of God.

He is Lord, He is God, He is *Almighty*, that is; He is over all, above all, "*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?*" Je 32:27 Regardless of your situation, look to Him, trust in Him, there's nothing too hard for Him.

He is eternal in nature, no beginning, no end, "Who was & is & is to come!" & These angelic beings live their existence to glorify God; I'm not sure that this is saying that they're like a broken record or a Cd on repeat just saying the same thing over & over (though they might be) but it certainly points to the primary emphasis of their existence to give God glory. How much more you & me? Were they redeemed by the blood of J.C.? No. Will they rule & reign as kings & priest unto God? No. Yet they are relentless in their pursuit to give God glory, how much more should we praise God, give Him glory & honor & blessing???

Vs 9-11

Here's the point, these cherubim display a contagious kind of worship... In essence they're the worship leaders of heaven, but not in the sense of "Ok, everyone sing along now! 2<sup>nd</sup> Vs same as the 1<sup>st</sup>!"

But rather their worship is so passionate, so genuine, so inspiring that others can't help but enter in as well. There is a response to their worship.

Now don't misunderstand me, we should never do what we do to be seen of men. Jesus made that very clear, yet neither should we hide our worship to the point that no one even has a clue that we love God!

The worship of the 4 living creatures prompts a response from the elders; they want to worship as well. Listen, when I see someone giving glory & honor to God, in a spirit of humility & genuine sincerity it makes me realize, "Hey, I need to be giving God glory as well, I need to honor God too!" **When you want to see others worship (worship leaders) sometimes the best thing you can do is worship God yourself... Get your eyes off the people and set the example of worshipping God in spirit & truth; be the 1<sup>st</sup> one before the throne...**

The elders declare, "You are worthy, O Lord" & they demonstrate that by casting their crowns before the throne. You see, if He is truly worthy, than why are you wearing a crown? **They recognize that, remove their crowns and cast them before the throne; it's not their work & it's not rightly their reward; it belongs to Jesus. God is the One who deserves the glory & He's the One who should have the crowns...**

"For You created all things & by Your will they exist & were created." They worship God for His creative power & glory, that out of nothing He made everything. Even so the fact that God is Creator gives Him right & claim over everything, even as a potter has the rights & the claims over the clay...

**You exist because of the will of God; you were created for Him & do well to give glory to Him. You can either accept His rights over you as Creator & leave here *elated*, or you can reject them & leave here *frustrated*...**

God is worthy of your worship; there is worth in Him, value; He's redeemed you, saved you, shed His blood for you, He's given His Holy Spirit to you, He gives guidance & direction to you, provides for you, answers prayer for you, He paid a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay... What's that worth to you?

**May God open our eyes, that we might see Him for who He is, so that we can no longer restrain our hearts from a contagious kind of worship that edifies one another, & glorifies Him...**

### Prayer Points:

Truly O Lord, You ARE worthy, to receive glory & honor and power, for You created all things & by You will they exist and were created. God we acknowledge You as our Creator & as such You have sovereign rights over our lives... So here we are, not seeking to direct You, or in anyway persuade You, but simply desiring to submit to You that You might have Your way in us. Teach us to walk in the Spirit, to worship You in spirit & truth & glorify Your name.

God has created you, He formed your inward parts when your substance was yet unseen & it's His will for you that you might know Him, receive forgiveness from Him being washed clean by the blood of J.C. So if God is dealing w/you, if He's tugging *on* you & you need Christ to come into your heart & forgive you of your sin; if you're ready to turn from your sin & believe on the Lord J.C. than do it today and find grace in Jesus name.