

Sent: Wednesday, November 3, 2021 4:21 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Revelation 4:1-11

"Worthy are you, our Lord, and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created!" (Revelation 4:11)

Last nite, we got into Revelation 4, beginning our study of the third of three major sections of the book of Revelation, following the divinely inspired outline of Revelation 1:19 about things that John, the beloved apostle of Christ, was shown (in a "heavenly vision") and instructed to write about, and to "send to the churches"! It's about things that he had seen, "about the risen, glorified Christ (included in chapter 1); about the "things that are," concerning the "seven churches" (which we learned about in chapters 2-3); and now, about the "things that are to take place after these things" (in chapters 4-22)! Wow! Lots of things!

John remained exiled (for his "testimony of Jesus") on the Isle of Patmos and was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" when he "heard a loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet," and was told to write about the things that he would see! The Lord obviously wanted His people to hear and understand some highly important things that John would see, and hear, and write about! (Interestingly, in contrast with John's experience, the apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:3-4, wrote about how he too was once "caught up into Paradise" but, in his case, hear inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak," and which he obviously couldn't write about!)

Revelation 4:1 begins with the words: "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things!' After what things? Obviously, the things concerning the churches! And things that would, and "must," take place!

What might one reasonably expect to have follow the messages to the churches, about the things to come? How about the "rapture" of church? But, ironically, there's no specific reference to it in chapter five, or in the rest of the book of Revelation and, in fact, the word "church" is not even mentioned again until Revelation 22:16, where John writes that all that was written was for a "testimony for the churches"!

Other Scripture, however, particularly I Corinthians 15:51-58 and I Thessalonians 4:16-18, appear to make it clear that the rapture is the next thing to happen, before the tribulation, a "mystery," but "coming soon," and serving as an incentive for believers to "being steadfast...and abounding in the work of the Lord"!

Walvoord (who was obviously a "pretribulationist") writes that "from a practical standpoint, the rapture may be viewed as having already happened (in the future scheme of things) before the unfolding of the events in chapters 4 through 19 of the book of Revelation." And we'll see some references, however subtle, that add support for this position, as we make our journey through the upcoming chapters of Revelation, which we'll note as we get to them!

But back to Revelation 4, as we see the scene change from matters concerning the church on earth, to the dramatic scenes of events in heaven! As John Neal noted last nite, "plenty of activities" and yet, we can be assured, only a smattering of what's really going on at, or before, or around the throne of God, which can be thought of as the "control center" (or "mission control") for the universe!

The most, and the best of, what we can know about what's happening in heaven is what we read and see in Revelations 4 and 5, which provides the introduction and background for, what Walvoord refers to as "the tremendous sweep of prophetic events predicted in the rest of the book of Revelation"! And rather than trying to describe it myself, what could be better than reading the exact words recorded in the sacred Scriptures themselves! And so here it is again, in the inspired words of John, the beloved disciple of Jesus:

"Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle! And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come!' And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created"! Whew!

MacArthur writes that John's vision of the throne is "not one of peace and comfort! Rather, its flashing splendid magnificence reveals the terror of God's judgment. It expresses the shining beauty of God's glory, but also of His blazing wrath, about to be poured out on the rebellious world!" Walvoord notes "it's a reminder of the sovereignty of God who is far removed from the petty struggles of earthly government...a true picture of the universe as being subject to the dominion of an omnipotent God!"

Then there's the "rainbow," a symbol in the Bible of God's mercy, which as Wiersbe observes, usually appears after the storm, but here appears before it! Nonetheless, a comforting balance to the fiery flashings and booming sounds of judgment!

So, who are the "twenty-four elders"? Angels or men? MacArthur makes the case for men who represent the "raptured church" (there we go!), dressed in "white garments," occupying positions of authority, living in a place prepared for them, where they have gone to be with Jesus (as He

promised them, in John 14:1-4)! Also having crowns to "cast before Him," and later (in Revelation 5) singing songs of redemption, joined by "myriads and myriads" of others who sing praises to the Lamb! (Sounds like the "raptured" church to me!)

Then there's the "four living creatures" (think "beings") who, according to Ezekiel 10:15, are "cherubim," an exalted order of angels frequently associated in Scripture with the execution of God's holy power, which MacArthur describes as "the divine war machine ready to unleash judgment"! Wow!

There are others recorded in Scripture who were also given special glimpses of God on His throne, which are consistent with, and complement, what John writes (and only affirm the inspiration of Scripture)!

- Ezekiel (in Ezekiel 1) saw the heavens opened with visions of God, and the "surrounding radiance of the likeness of the glory of God," as part of his calling to speak "words of judgment and (eventual) deliverance to the "stubborn and obstinate" children of Israel, with whom He (God) had made an everlasting covenant!
- Isaiah (in Isaiah 6:1-3) "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple...with Seraphim standing above Him, each having six wings...calling out to one another, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory'!"
- Then, of course, Daniel (in Daniel 7:13-14), "beholding with the clouds One like the Son of Man... coming to the Ancient of Days...and given dominion, glory and a kingdom that would never pass away"!
- And remember Steven, the martyr, in the New Testament, "gazing intently into heaven and seeing the glory of God, and Jesus standing at His right hand"!

Well, more could be said; but, thankfully, the scene of Revelation 4 ends in a positive note: in worship directed toward God on the throne, with a great hymn of praise, and a focus on God's glory in creation! And so, we leave our study with a better view and understanding of the holiness and sovereignty and justice and graciousness of God and what it means to truly worship Him and place our faith and hope for the future in Him alone!

May we always aspire to "crown Him Lord of all"!

Lowell