

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 4

REVELATION 4:1 - "AFTER THESE THINGS I LOOKED...COME UP HERE, AND I WILL SHOW YOU..."

WHEN WE FIRST STARTED TO READ REVELATION, ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES WE DISCUSSED WAS THAT REVELATION WAS NOT WRITTEN IN SOME CHRONOLOGICAL, "END-TIME-TIME-LINE" ORDER. THE QUESTION WE WILL ASK AS WE JOURNEY INTO THE PROPHETIC AND DESCRIPTIVE PORTION OF THIS WRITING IS NOT "WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?" BUT "WHAT DOES JOHN SEE NEXT?" THERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION THAT DO COMMUNICATE THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE, FOLLOWED BY OTHER DETAILS ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT, BUT WE ARE READING THIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE *FIRST* OF THE FIRST READERS OF THE DOCUMENT, THE 7 CHURCHES WE JUST MET IN CHAPTERS 2 & 3.

THE FIRST THING JOHN SEES IS AN OPEN DOOR IN HEAVEN AND A VOICE (WHICH HE HEARD PREVIOUSLY IN 1:10) INVITING HIM TO COME TOWARDS THE DOOR. THE IMPLICATION FOR JOHN IS THAT HE FOLLOWS THE VOICE AND WALKS THROUGH THE HEAVENLY DOOR, HE'S GOING TO BE SHOWN "WHAT MUST TAKE PLACE AFTER THESE THINGS."

REVELATION 4:2-3 - A THRONE & ONE SITTING ON THE THRONE

"IMMEDIATELY I WAS IN THE SPIRIT" MEANS THAT JOHN WASN'T LITERALLY IN HEAVEN, BUT THAT HE WAS SEEING A VISION OF HEAVEN. THE FIRST THING HE SEES IN THE VISION IS A THRONE AND "ONE SITTING ON THE THRONE (4:2)."

THE ONE SITTING ON THE THRONE IS NOT YET IDENTIFIED, BUT THEIR APPEARANCE IS DESCRIBED. JOHN IS USING LANGUAGE AND REFERENCE POINTS TO HELP THE READER UNDERSTAND WHAT HE IS SEEING.

LIKE A **JASPER** STONE - A JASPER STONE IS A TRANSLUCENT STONE, WHICH REFLECTS LIGHT. SOMETIMES THESE STONES WERE GREEN

SARDIUS (ESV: "CARNELIAN") IN APPEARANCE. A SARDIUS/CARNELIAN WAS A SEMIPRECIOUS GEMSTONE, USUALLY RED IN COLOR.

A RAINBOW, LIKE AN EMERALD IN APPEARANCE. THERE WAS A RAINBOW AROUND THE THRONE WHICH APPARENTLY HAD AN APPEARANCE OF AN EMERALD, ANOTHER GEMSTONE THAT WAS USUALLY GREEN. THE NET TRANSLATES THIS AS "A RAINBOW LOOKING LIKE IT WAS MADE OF EMERALD ENCIRCLED THE THRONE."

JOHN SUGGESTS LUMINOUS COLORS--**JASPER, CARNELIAN, RAINBOW, EMERALD**--BUT AVOIDS PRECISE DESCRIPTION OF THE ALMIGHTY'S VISIBLE FEATURES, PERHAPS BECAUSE HE KNEW NO LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE WHAT HE SAW. (ESV STUDY BIBLE, REVELATION 4:3)"

REVELATION 4:4 - AROUND THE THRONE

24 ELDERS, SITTING, CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS, WITH GOLDEN CROWNS ON THEIR HEADS. WE DON'T KNOW WHO THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE. WE KNOW THAT THE NUMBER 12 IS SIGNIFICANT IN SCRIPTURE - MOST NOTABLY THAT THERE WERE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND

12 APOSTLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. PERHAPS THIS IS SYMBOLIC OF THE JOINING OF THE TWO KEY GROUPS AROUND GOD'S THRONE - BUT THE TEXT DOESN'T TELL US SPECIFICALLY.

WHAT IT DOES TELL US IS THAT THESE 24 INDIVIDUALS WERE "ELDERS", "WEARING WHITE" WITH "GOLDEN CROWNS". WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY ARE IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY AND IMPORTANCE. THEY ARE AROUND THE THRONE OF THE ONE WHO IS THE CENTER OF THIS VISION (WHICH IS A PRETTY BIG DEAL) AND WEARING ROYAL GARMENTS. FOR NOW, WE SEE 24 IMPORTANT FIGURES AROUND THE THRONE. MORE ON THEM LATER.

REVELATION 4:5 - OUT FROM THE THRONE

COMING FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE THRONE JOHN REPORTS OF "FLASHES OF LIGHTNING, SOUNDS AND PEALS OF THUNDER". LIGHTNING AND THUNDER ARE PRETTY INTENSE. FROM THIS THRONE WE DON'T HAVE A SOFT WARM LIGHT OF A SWEET SUMMER BREEZE WIND CHIME - WE HAVE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

IT'S HARD NOT TO THINK ABOUT MOUNT SINAI AS WE READ THIS VERSE. WHEN GOD MET THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AFTER THEIR DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT HIS GLORY AND POWER CAME DOWN TO MOUNT SINAI IN THE WILDERNESS AND THE PEOPLE FREAKED OUT AT THE SIGHT.

EXODUS 19:10-11 - THE LORD ALSO SAID TO MOSES, "GO TO THE PEOPLE AND CONSECRATE THEM TODAY AND TOMORROW, AND LET THEM WASH THEIR GARMENTS; 11 AND LET THEM BE READY FOR THE THIRD DAY, FOR ON THE THIRD DAY THE LORD WILL COME DOWN ON MOUNT SINAI IN THE SIGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLE.

EXODUS 19:16 - SO IT CAME ABOUT ON THE THIRD DAY, WHEN IT WAS MORNING, THAT THERE WERE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING FLASHES AND A THICK CLOUD UPON THE MOUNTAIN AND A VERY LOUD TRUMPET SOUND, SO THAT ALL THE PEOPLE WHO WERE IN THE CAMP TREMBLED.

EXODUS 20:18-19 - ALL THE PEOPLE PERCEIVED THE THUNDER AND THE LIGHTNING FLASHES AND THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET AND THE MOUNTAIN SMOKING; AND WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW IT, THEY TREMBLED AND STOOD AT A DISTANCE. 19 THEN THEY SAID TO MOSES, "SPEAK TO US YOURSELF AND WE WILL LISTEN; BUT LET NOT GOD SPEAK TO US, OR WE WILL DIE."

JOHN IS SEEING AND EXPERIENCING SOMETHING SIMILAR IN THIS HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM.

SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE BURNING BEFORE THE THRONE ARE IDENTIFIED AS THE "SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD". THIS WAS MENTIONED IN REVELATION 1:4 & 3:1 ALREADY. WE DISCUSSED THAT THESE ARE LIKELY REPRESENTATIVE IN SOME WAY OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES FROM THE LETTER. THERE WAS ALSO A LAMPSTAND IN THE TABERNACLE/TEMPLE WHICH HAD 7 LAMPS AND WAS IN FRONT OF THE MOST HOLY PLACE (EXODUS 25:37).

REVELATION 4:6A - BEFORE THE THRONE

JOHN STARTS AT THE THRONE AND GRADUALLY MOVES HIS SIGHTS OUTWARD. NOW HE IS OBSERVING WHAT IS BEFORE, OR IN FRONT OF, THE THRONE. FIRST HE SEES "SOMETHING LIKE A SEA OF GLASS, LIKE CRYSTAL". WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHATEVER THIS "SEA OF GLASS" MAY BE, IT'S SOMETHING THAT IS PRESENT CONSISTENTLY IN THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM VISIONS WE GET IN SCRIPTURE.

EXODUS 24:10 - AND THEY SAW THE GOD OF ISRAEL; AND UNDER HIS FEET THERE APPEARED TO BE A PAVEMENT OF SAPPHIRE, AS CLEAR AS THE SKY ITSELF.

EZEKIEL 1:22 NLT - SPREAD OUT ABOVE THEM WAS A SURFACE LIKE THE SKY, GLITTERING LIKE CRYSTAL.

REVELATION 15:2 - AND I SAW SOMETHING LIKE A SEA OF GLASS MIXED WITH FIRE, AND THOSE WHO HAD BEEN VICTORIOUS OVER THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE AND THE NUMBER OF HIS NAME, STANDING ON THE SEA OF GLASS, HOLDING HARPS OF GOD.

SO WHAT IS IT? THE ESV STUDY BIBLE SUGGESTS THIS: THE **SEA OF GLASS** APPEARS IN PROPHETIC VISIONS OF GOD'S THRONE ROOM (EX. 24:10; EZEK. 1:22, 26; REV. 15:2). IT IS THE "FLOOR" OF HEAVEN AND THE "CEILING" OF THE CREATED UNIVERSE, AND ITS TRANSPARENT TRANQUILITY SHOWS HEAVEN'S PEACE IN CONTRAST TO EARTHLY TURMOIL.

REVELATION 4:6-8 - FOUR LIVING CREATURES

AND NOW IT GETS INTERESTING! IN THE CENTER AND AROUND THE THRONE, THERE ARE WHAT JOHN DESCRIBES AS "FOUR LIVING CREATURES FULL OF EYES IN FRONT AND BEHIND." THESE 4 CREATURES COVERED WITH EYES MUST BE ABLE TO SEE ALL THAT IS GOING ON. THEY WILL APPEAR AND BE GIVEN SPECIFIC TASKS THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF REVELATION. HERE'S A BREAKDOWN OF WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR:

CREATURE 1 - LIKE A LION

CREATURE 2 - LIKE A CALF

CREATURE 3 - FACE LIKE A MAN

CREATURE 4 - LIKE A FLYING EAGLE

EACH CREATURE HAS SIX WINGS AND ARE COVERED WITH EYES

FOR A NEW BIBLE STUDENT READING ABOUT THESE CREATURES FOR THE 1ST TIME IN REVELATION, ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE APPEARANCE OF THESE CREATURES WILL ARISE. BUT FOR THE SEASONED BIBLE READER, LIKE MUCH OF REVELATION, WE HAVE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.

TWO OTHER PROPHETS WERE GIVEN A VISION OF THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, ISAIAH AND EZEKIEL. LET'S LOOK BACK AT WHAT THEY SAW AND HEARD WHEN THEY SAW HEAVEN. (I HAVE NOTED THE IMPORTANT WORDS)

ISAIAH 6:1-4 - IN THE YEAR OF KING UZZIAH'S DEATH I SAW THE LORD SITTING ON A THRONE, LOFTY AND EXALTED, WITH THE TRAIN OF HIS ROBE FILLING THE TEMPLE. 2 SERAPHIM STOOD ABOVE HIM, EACH HAVING SIX WINGS: WITH TWO HE COVERED HIS FACE, AND WITH TWO HE COVERED HIS FEET, AND WITH TWO HE FLEW. 3 AND ONE CALLED OUT TO ANOTHER AND SAID, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY." 4 AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE THRESHOLDS TREMBLED AT THE VOICE OF HIM WHO CALLED OUT, WHILE THE TEMPLE WAS FILLING WITH SMOKE.

EZEKIEL 1:1 (NLT) - ON JULY 31 OF MY THIRTIETH YEAR, WHILE I WAS WITH THE JUDEAN EXILES BESIDE THE KEBAR RIVER IN BABYLON, THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED AND I SAW VISIONS OF GOD.

EZEKIEL 1:4-7, 10-11 (NLT) - AS I LOOKED, I SAW A GREAT STORM COMING FROM THE NORTH, DRIVING BEFORE IT A HUGE CLOUD THAT FLASHED WITH LIGHTNING AND SHONE WITH BRILLIANT LIGHT. THERE WAS FIRE INSIDE THE CLOUD, AND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIRE GLOWED SOMETHING LIKE GLEAMING AMBER. 5 FROM THE CENTER OF THE CLOUD CAME FOUR LIVING BEINGS THAT LOOKED HUMAN, 6 EXCEPT THAT EACH HAD FOUR FACES AND FOUR WINGS. 7 THEIR LEGS WERE STRAIGHT, AND THEIR FEET HAD HOOVES LIKE THOSE OF A CALF AND SHONE LIKE BURNISHED BRONZE.

10 EACH HAD A HUMAN FACE IN THE FRONT, THE FACE OF A LION ON THE RIGHT SIDE, THE FACE OF AN OX ON THE LEFT SIDE, AND THE FACE OF AN EAGLE AT THE BACK. 11 EACH HAD TWO PAIRS OF OUTSTRETCHED WINGS-- ONE PAIR STRETCHED OUT TO TOUCH THE WINGS OF THE LIVING BEINGS ON EITHER SIDE OF IT, AND THE OTHER PAIR COVERED ITS BODY.

EZEKIEL 1:15, 18 - AS I LOOKED AT THESE BEINGS, I SAW FOUR WHEELS TOUCHING THE GROUND BESIDE THEM, ONE WHEEL BELONGING TO EACH...18 THE RIMS OF THE FOUR WHEELS WERE TALL AND FRIGHTENING, AND THEY WERE COVERED WITH EYES ALL AROUND.

IT IS INTERESTING TO CONSIDER THE SYMBOLISM OF THESE 4 LIVING CREATURES BEFORE THE THRONE. MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT WHAT EACH PART OF THE CREATURES MIGHT MEAN OR REPRESENT. THOSE WRITINGS ARE BOTH HELPFUL *AND* CONFUSING. HERE'S ONE THING THAT IS CLEAR: WHATEVER THE MEANING OF THE CREATURES MAY BE, WE KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING. "DAY AND NIGHT THEY DO NOT CEASE TO SAY (ECHOING ISAIAH 6) "HOLY HOLY HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." WE'VE NOW BEEN GIVEN CONFIRMATION THAT ALMIGHTY GOD IS THE ONE ON THE THRONE.

THEY ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ONE SEATED ON THE THRONE AND THEY CANNOT HELP BUT PROCLAIM HIS MAJESTY AND GREATNESS. THIS SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH SOME MEANINGLESS REPETITION OR DRONE LIKE CHANT. THEY CANNOT HELP BUT PROCLAIM THE GREATNESS OF GOD BECAUSE OF THEIR PROXIMITY TO HIM. IN FACT, THEIR EXALTATION OF GOD INSPIRES OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

REVELATION 4:9-11 - WHAT IS HAPPENING...

WHEN THE 4 LIVING CREATURES BREAK OUT INTO PRAISE, THE REST OF THE HEAVENLY CONGREGATION JOINS THEM. THE ELDERS, WHO WE BELIEVE ARE PRETTY IMPORTANT FIGURES, FALL DOWN TO WORSHIP AND THROW THEIR GOLDEN CROWNS TOWARDS THE THRONE. IN OTHER WORDS, AS IMPORTANT AS THESE 24 ELDERS ARE, IN COMPARISON TO THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, THEY ARE INSIGNIFICANT. THEIR AUTHORITY (SYMBOLIZED BY THEIR CROWNS) IS INSIGNIFICANT IN LIGHT OF THE AUTHORITY AND MAJESTY OF GOD. THEY PROCLAIM ALONG WITH THE 4 LIVING CREATURES THAT GOD IS WORTHY OF ALL GLORY, HONOR AND POWER, THAT HE IS CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF ALL. WHAT A VISION TO BEHOLD!

"THE CRY 'WORTHY' DOES NOT COME FROM THE RELIGIOUS WORLD. IT COMES FROM THE SECULAR WORLD, FROM THE POLITICAL REALM. 'WORTHY' IS WHAT WAS SHOUTED BY THE CITIZENS TO THE EMPEROR WHEN HE ENTERED THE CITY. 'WORTHY' IS WHAT WAS SHOUTED BY THE ROMAN SENATORS AS THE EMPEROR ENTERED THE GREAT HALL."

SCHOLARS HAVE DONE A GREAT DEAL OF RESEARCH INTO THE SO-CALLED 'IMPERIAL HYMNS', THE SONGS AND CHORUSES SUNG AT POLITICAL EVENTS. HERE IS A LIST OF WORDS AND PHRASES SHOUTED TO THE EMPEROR: HOLY ONE, GLORY, SALVATION BELONGS TO YOU, AUTHORITY, WORTHY TO RECEIVE POWER, RIGHTEOUS IN YOUR JUDGMENTS, OUR LORD AND GOD, LORD OF THE EARTH, LORD OF THE WORLD."

THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS AND FOUR LIVING CREATURES KNOW WHO TRULY DESERVES SUCH SHOUTS. AND THEY KNOW WHY: 'FOR YOU CREATED ALL THINGS AND BY YOUR WILL THEY WERE CREATED AND HAVE THEIR BEING (4:4)' THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS KNOW THAT THEY, AND THE EMPEROR, OWE EVERY BEAT OF THEIR HEARTS AND EVERY BREATH OF THEIR LUNGS TO THE HOLY ONE ON THE THRONE. (DARRELL JOHNSON, "DISCIPLESHIP ON THE EDGE", PAGES 139-140)

IT'S REALLY GOOD FOR US TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE THRONE ROOM BECAUSE AS WE READ REVELATION WE'RE GOING TO BE TEMPTED TO FREAK OUT AND WONDER "WHAT IS HAPPENING??!" SO BEFORE PROPHECY IS SPOKEN OR INTERPRETED, WE ARE BROUGHT TO THE CENTERING PLACE OF CREATION - THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD. THIS CENTERS US, THIS GROUNDS US.

WE WILL DISCOVER THAT REVELATION 5 IS COMPLEMENTARY TO CHAPTER 4 AND WILL COMPLETE THE VISION OF THE THRONE ROOM. BUT IT IS A GOOD THING TO PAUSE AT THE END OF 4 TO BASK IN THE GLORY OF THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. THIS VISION IS GOING TO ANCHOR US AS WE SAIL ON THROUGH THE BOOK.

A FEW CLOSING THOUGHTS:

REVELATION 4 (AND 5) HAS SOME OF THE MOST VIVID DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT HEAVEN IS LIKE. BUT WE NEED TO BE THOUGHTFUL WHEN WE THINK ABOUT "HEAVEN". HEAVEN IN SCRIPTURE IS DESCRIBED AS GOD'S REALM, WHERE GOD LIVES AND RULES. THE VISIONS OF HEAVEN WE JUST READ DO HAVE INCREDIBLE IMAGES AND DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS - BUT THE FOCUS OF THESE VISIONS IS ALWAYS GOD. THERE ARE OTHER CREATURES PRESENT, SOME OF WHOM ARE DESCRIBED, BUT THE FOCUS IS ON THE LORD. HEAVEN IN SCRIPTURE IS NOT DESCRIBED AS THE PLACE PEOPLE GO AFTER THEY DIE, NOR THE FINAL DESTINATION OF THE SAINTS. THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE RELATING TO THAT IS "THE KINGDOM OF GOD" AND "ETERNAL LIFE" (WHICH *LITERALLY* MEANS THE "LIFE OF THE AGE TO COME"). THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE FUTURE OF GOD'S PEOPLE AND "LIFE AFTER DEATH" WITH WORDS LIKE "RESTORATION", "RENEWAL", "MADE NEW". THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS SPEAK OF A "NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTHS" WHICH HARKEN BACK TO THE GENESIS CREATION STORY WHERE "IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH..." (GENESIS 1:1). AND WHERE WERE HUMANS IN THE BEGINNING - ON THE EARTH. EDEN WAS THE PLACE THAT HEAVEN AND EARTH MET. WHEN SIN ENTERED THE WORLD, THAT MEETING PLACE WAS BROKEN AND IT WAS ONLY THE CROSS OF CHRIST THAT BEGAN TO REUNITE THOSE SEPARATE REALMS - THE PLACE GOD DWELLS AND THE PLACE HUMANS DWELL GOT CLOSER - AND IN THE FUTURE, AS THE CLASSIC HYMN "THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD" INSTRUCTS:

*THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD:
THE BATTLE IS NOT DONE:
JESUS WHO DIED SHALL BE SATISFIED,
AND EARTH AND HEAV'N BE ONE.*

HEAVEN, AS WE SEE AGAIN IN REVELATION 4 IS THE PLACE OF GOD'S THRONE - HIS PRESENCE AND GLORY BURSTING FORTH AND INSPIRING PRAISE. AND THE CHRISTIAN HOPE IS NOT TO MAKE IT TO HEAVEN, BUT FOR HEAVEN TO ONCE AGAIN MAKE IT TO EARTH. JESUS TAUGHT US THAT WE SHOULD PRAY THAT "GOD'S KINGDOM WOULD COME, THAT GOD'S WILL WOULD BE DONE, ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN..." WE'RE LONGING FOR THE DAY WHEN EVERYTHING THAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD WILL BE MADE RIGHT.

AS MUCH AS SENTIMENTAL IMAGES, POPULAR MOVIES, CHURCH TRADITIONS AND FUNERAL LITURGY TRY TO HELP US MAKE SENSE OF LIFE, DEATH AND LIFE AFTER DEATH, THE BIBLE IS THE PLACE WE OUGHT TO TURN FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S GOOD PLAN FOR US AND HIS CREATION. GOD HAS COMMUNICATED THROUGH ITS PAGES WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BE LIKE - IT'S NOT CLOUDY OR NEBULOUS - IT'S CLEAR AND CONCRETE. IN

FACT, THE HOPE LAID OUT IN SCRIPTURE IS CALLED AN "ANCHOR TO THE SOUL" (HEBREWS 6:19). AND WHAT GOOD IS AN ANCHOR IF IT ISN'T STEADFAST AND SURE?

AS WE SAID ABOVE, IT IS SO GOOD TO SEE INTO THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM AS WE TRANSITION AWAY FROM THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES AND INTO WHAT IS THE REST OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION. WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS?

FIRST WE LEARN THAT THERE IS A LOT OF ACTIVITY HAPPENING IN HEAVEN. GLORY IS STREAMING, ANGELIC CREATURES ARE WORSHIPING, ELDERS ARE SEATED AND BOWING AND THROWING CROWNS. LIGHTNING IS CRACKING, THUNDER IS ROARING AND PRAISES ARE BEING PROCLAIMED. THIS ISN'T A PICTURE OF A QUIET PLACE WITH AN OLD BEARDED MAN ON A ROCKING CHAIR. THIS IS A PICTURE OF LIFE, MOVEMENT, COLOR, SOUND, AND AUTHORITY.

SECOND WE SEE THAT GOD IS THE CENTER OF THE VISION. THE ELDERS AND CREATURES ARE FASCINATING, BUT THEY YIELD TO THE ONE WHO IS ON THE THRONE. EVERY VISION OF HEAVEN IN SCRIPTURE HAS GOD AS IT'S FOCUS. SURE THERE ARE SERAPHIM AND CHERUBIM, WINGS AND EYES, BUT WHAT ARE THEY DOING? LOOKING AT, FALLING BEFORE, WORSHIPING AND EXCLAIMING THE GREATNESS OF GOD ALMIGHTY.

LASTLY, THE VISION WE HAVE JUST READ IS SOMETHING THAT PORTRAYS WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE HEAVENLY REALM BEFORE REVELATION 4 AND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE HEAVENLY REALM AFTER REVELATION 4. GOD IS HOLY AND EXALTED AND WORTHY OF GLORY, HONOR, AND POWER [PERIOD]. THIS REALITY WOULD HAVE CENTERED THE CHURCHES OF THE TIME - FACING PERSECUTION AND TRIBULATIONS. THEY WOULD TURN THEIR ATTENTION TOWARDS HEAVEN AND REMEMBER THAT THROUGH THE TRIALS, GOD WAS STILL OVER ALL. THE EMPERORS WOULD COME AND GO, BUT THE LORD IS THE ONE WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME. THEIR DAYS WERE UNSTABLE AND THEIR HUMAN INSTITUTIONS UNRELIABLE - THEY WOULD NEED TO KEEP COMING BACK TO THAT TRUTH AND JOIN IN THE SONG OF PRAISE.

IF THEY KEPT THEIR ATTENTION ON GOD AND HIS POWER AND GLORY, THEY WOULD KEEP THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE. SO THE VOICE LIKE THE SOUND OF A TRUMPET IS GOING TO INVITE JOHN TO SEE THE THINGS, MANY TERRIFYING, THAT "MUST TAKE PLACE AFTER THESE THINGS" (4:1), BUT FIRST THEY MUST STOP AND SEE THE HEAVENLY THRONE AND ITS COURT AND ITS COMPANY FOR THAT PLACE OF WORSHIP. YOU CAN'T UNSEE WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN IN REVELATION 4. JOHN ENTERS IN, INVITING US TO SEE TOO, AND INVITING US TO WORSHIP. JOHN WILL LEAVE THIS GLORIOUS VISION, BRINGING WITH HIM THE PERSPECTIVE THAT WILL COLOR EVERYTHING ELSE HE WILL EXPERIENCE IN THE DAYS TO COME - WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT WORSHIP DOES.