

Sermon Notes for December 4, 2016

**Sermon Series On The  
Holiness Of God  
“The Ultimate Destination Of God’s Holy People”  
Revelation 4:1-11**

**Introduction**

**A. Today, We Will Conclude Our Sermon Series On The Holiness Of God**

1. During this sermon series, it has been the desire of your Pastors that all of us:
  - a. better understand that our God is holy
    1. yes, we can know God
    2. yes, we can be intimate with God
    3. yes, we can be personal with God
  - b. **BUT, THAT DOES NOT DIMINISH THE ABSOLUTE FACT THAT GOD IS HOLY**
2. During this sermon series, your Pastors have **ALSO** discussed the fact that sinful man is not holy
  - a. and, that all believers struggle with this comparison; the believer of God and the sinfulness of man.
  - b. causing us to ask: **“HOW CAN A HOLY GOD FELLOWSHIP WITH UNHOLY MAN?”**

**B. Today, We Will All Be Encouraged Because Our Destination As Sinners Is Heaven**

1. I want to encourage all of us today, for **DESPITE** our lack of holiness, the Christian’s ultimate destination is heaven!
2. And, you wonder; **WHAT RIGHT DO I HAVE TO BE IN GOD’S HOLY HEAVEN?**
  - a. well, we do NOT deserve to be in God’s holy heaven
  - b. but, our wonderful, holy savior, Jesus Christ, has paid for our sins to “allow” us to go to heaven
3. And, today, we will all hear about the wonderful place that we will call home for eternity.

**I. WHO was ON The Throne?**

**A. The DREAM OF Heaven.**

1. Because of his faith in Jesus, the Apostle John, the writer of the book of Revelation, had been banished to a place called the **Isle of Patmos in 96 A.D. by Emperor Domitius. Patmos** was a lonely island in the Aegean Sea, only 11 square miles in area.
2. It was on this small island that John received a vision from God that is now called the book of Revelation.
  - a. in this dream, one of the visions that God gave to John was a vision of heaven
  - b. we must realize, however, that this was a “vision” or a “dream” given to John
    1. how is a dream to be interpreted?

2. is this dream to be interpreted literally?
3. Today, we are going to look closely at the text and **“attempt”** to explain it “as literally as possible.”
  - a. we must all recognize that because this is a dream, there are many interpretations that could be given
  - b. so, here is what **I** believe about John’s vision of heaven that he received on the Isle of Patmos.

#### B. The DOOR Of Heaven.

**Vs. 1** - After this I looked, and there before me was **a door** standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like **a trumpet** said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

1. The **FIRST** thing that John **saw** in his dream about heaven was **A DOOR**.
  - a. the door would “assume” that there was something “behind” the door.
  - b. and, as the door swung open it would “reveal” all that was in heaven behind that door
  - c. my experience at Christmas; we all waited until “the door” was opened
  - d. so, it appears that there is a door to heaven which one must enter
2. The **SECOND** thing that John **heard** was a **trumpet**.
  - a. in the Old Testament, a trumpet was used **to call attention to big events**  
**Joel 2:1** – **“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand.”**
  - b. when Christ returns to this earth, there will be a trumpet to announce His arrival  
**I Thessalonians 4:16** – **“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”**
  - c. so, not only does the door to heaven open, there is a trumpet declaring that something special is about to happen to John

#### C. The THRONE Of Heaven.

**Vs. 2** – “At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was **a throne** in heaven with someone sitting on it.”

1. **THE FIRST THING** that the Apostle John saw after he entered the door of heaven **WAS A THRONE!**
  - a. this is **EXACTLY** what others in the Scripture saw when they first saw a vision of heaven
    1. The **prophet Isaiah** in **Isaiah 6:1** – “In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord seated on a throne**, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the Temple.”
    2. The **prophet Ezekiel** in **Ezekiel 1:26** – “Above the expanse over their heads was what **looked like a throne of sapphire**, and high above on **the throne** was a figure like that of a man.”

- b. in fact, the book of Revelation is a book about that throne:
    1. the word throne is used some **45 times** in the book of Revelation
    2. in chapter 4 alone, the word throne is mentioned some **11 times**
    3. some call Revelation 4 the “Throne chapter of the Bible.”
- 2. DOESN'T IT MAKE SENSE THAT THERE WOULD BE A THRONE IN HEAVEN!**
- a. **a logical picture**
    1. **WHAT ELSE** would you expect to see as you entered heaven; a couch or a rocking chair?
    2. a throne is **EXACTLY** what you would expect to see the second you walked into heaven
    3. As one has said, “The bottom line of atheism or materialism is **that there is no throne**, there is **no seat of authority or power** that the entire universe must answer to. The bottom line of humanism is that there is a throne, **but man sits upon it.**”
  - b. **a powerful picture**
    1. in fact, the Middle Eastern view of a throne was this:
      - a. the more powerful the King, the higher was the throne
      - b. notice how God’s throne is described in **Isaiah 66:1** – “**Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool.**”
        1. You can’t get “any higher” than heaven itself! So, heaven itself is the very throne of God.
        2. **IN FACT, GOD’S THRONE IS “SO HIGH” THAT “GOD PUTS HIS FEET ON THE EARTH TO REST HIS FEET!”**
    2. **LET ME MAKE AN OBSERVATION ABOUT “THIS THRONE”: NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS ON THIS EARTH, GOD IS SITTING ON HIS THRONE AS THE RULER OF THIS WORLD!**
      - a. There is nothing “left to chance.” God is not “hoping that things will work out.” **GOD IS CONFIDENTLY SEATED ON HIS THRONE!**
      - b. **John MacArthur:** “The whimsical, mindless, purposeless forces of random chance do not, as many foolishly believe, govern the universe. **Instead, the sovereign, omnipotent Creator of the universe is sitting on His throne as its ruler.**”
      - c. As a history major, this is an historical truth: There are good and bad times and bad and good times, and that will continue until Jesus returns to this earth. **BUT GOD CONTINUES TO SIT ON HIS THRONE THROUGHOUT HISTORY!**

## II. WHAT was AROUND The Throne?

### A. The APPEARANCE OF THE STONES.

**Vs. 3a** – “And the one who sat there had the appearance of **jasper** and **carnelian**.”

1. As soon as John sees the throne of God, he is overwhelmed by the brilliance of two different stones.
2. John does not actually “see” the face of God as he looks at the throne: instead he is overwhelmed by the “brilliance of the stones” he sees.
3. The stones described:
  - a. **jasper**
    1. most commentators believe this to be a **brilliant, clear diamond**
    2. so . . . the first thing that you realize about God is that He is **absolutely dazzling and pure**
    3. John was literally overwhelmed with God’s brilliance and purity
  - b. **carnelian**
    1. the second stone was more than likely a **red ruby**
    2. the ruby in Scripture often represented the justice or even wrath of God
    3. so . . . while the first stone overwhelmed John with the brilliance and purity of God, the second stone represented God as righteous and just.

### B. The APPEARANCE OF THE RAINBOW.

**Vs. 3b** – “A **rainbow** resembling an emerald encircled the throne.”

1. No sooner was John overwhelmed by the purity and justice of God, he then saw a **rainbow**.
2. You may not know that a rainbow is actually a full circle: we usually see only half of that circle, or half of the rainbow
3. This rainbow literally encircled the entire throne of God.
4. In order to understand the meaning of the rainbow in John’s dream, we have to see where the rainbow was used in Scripture **in the life of Noah**.
  - a. because of the sin of mankind, God destroyed the earth by a flood
  - b. however, **after** the flood, God sent Noah a rainbow, signifying that He would never send another disastrous flood to the earth
  - c. thus, the two statements of the rainbow of Noah would be:
    1. first . . . **God’s justice and wrath in punishing man was over**
    2. and, second . . . **God would use the rainbow to say that He would never send another worldwide flood to the earth**
      - a. **ONE – GOD IS STILL A GOD OF WRATH!**
      - b. **TWO – GOD IS STILL A GOD OF GRACE**
        1. yes, God is “**still**” a God of mercy
        2. and yes, God is “**still**” a God of wrath
        3. in the time of the flood, the rainbow came at the “end” of God’s judgment

4. however, the rainbow that appears in John's vision prophecies that God's judgment will come "just as" it did in the days of Noah!
5. **Warren Wiersbe** – "Usually, a rainbow appears **after** the storm: but here, in the book of Revelation, we see it **before** the storm."

### C. The APPEARANCE OF THE ELDERS.

**Vs. 4** – "Surrounding the throne were **twenty-four other thrones**, and seated on them were **twenty-four elders**. They were **dressed in white** and had **crowns of gold** on their heads."

1. RIGHT AFTER seeing the brilliance of the stones and the rainbow, John saw **twenty-four elders EACH SEATED ON HIS OWN THRONE.**
  - a. **some say** that these twenty-four elders are representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles
  - b. however, this is what **I think**:
    1. the elders **represent** believers
      - a. these are **not** the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve Apostles
      - b. the elders actually represent you and me as Christians
        1. **JESUS CHRIST CLEARLY TEACHES THAT ALL CHRISTIANS WILL ONE DAY BE SEATED ON THEIR OWN THRONE IN HEAVEN!**
          - a. **Matthew 19:28** - Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, **you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**"
          - b. **Revelation 3:21** – "To him who overcomes, **I will give the right to sit with me on my throne**, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne."
        2. **EACH OF US WHO KNOW CHRIST WILL REIGN WITH HIM IN HEAVEN ON OUR OWN THRONE!**
2. the elders **encourage** believers
  - a. the elders are **dressed in white**
    1. **DESPITE THE FACT THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US IS A SINNER, THIS WHITE CLOTHING SAYS THAT WE WILL BE SEEN AS RIGHTEOUS IN HEAVEN!**
    2. we will not have to do "ANYTHING ELSE" to merit God's love for us when we get to heaven!

3. **INSTEAD, WE WILL SIT “IN” THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS!**
  4. as one has said; **“Never again will I have to run to Jesus to confess my sins. Never again will I see the gaze that Jesus gave Peter after he denied Christ the third time. I will be holy and righteous, forever.”**
    - b. the elders are **wearing crowns**
      1. what the crowns **were not:**
        - a. John did not use the Greek word; **diadem** – a ruler’s crown
        - b. God **alone** has that “kind” of crown, for He alone is King
      2. what the crowns **were:**
        - a. the Greek word that John used is **stephanos**
        - b. a stephanos was a **“victor’s crown,”** a crown given to the winner of a race in the Olympic games
        - c. thus, these crowns will be given to those who have **“finished the Christian race successfully”** – so, we too will have these crowns in heaven if we “finish the race”
      3. Paul, in the Mamertine prison in Rome, before his death, wrote of “this crown” (**stephanos**) **II Timothy 4:6-8** – “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and **the time has come for my departure**. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the **crown of righteousness (stephanos)**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, **but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”**
2. **DON’T MISS THIS WONDERFUL PICTURE OF THE ELDERS.**  
**Matthew Henry** – “**Their sitting** denotes the Christian’s **honor, rest, and satisfaction**. Their **sitting about the throne** signifies their **relation to God**, their **nearness to Him**, the **sight and enjoyment** they have of Him. The elders are **clothed in white raiment**, the righteousness of the saints. They had on **their heads crowns of gold**, signifying **the honor and authority given to them by God**, and the **glory they have with Him.**”

### III. WHAT came OUT OF The Throne?

#### A. There Was LIGHTNING.

**Vs. 5a** – “From the throne came **flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.**”

1. After all John had seen that, around the throne of God, he next saw lightning and heard thunder.
2. The Old Testament’s view of lightning:
  - a. most often, lightning in the Old Testament **represented the wrath and justice of God**
  - b. a classic example of this lightning was seen at **Mount Sinai** with the giving of the 10 Commandments – **Exodus 19:16** – “On the morning of the third day there was thunder and **lightning**, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled.”
3. God used lightning in the Scripture to tell everyone **“LISTEN . . . I AM ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING!”**

#### B. There Was THUNDER

**Exodus 19:16** – “On the morning of the third day there was **thunder** and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled.”

1. It was not enough for John to merely see flashes of lightning for there was the rumble of thunder as well. God was in a sense, “shaking heaven” to make His point to John.
2. My surround sound - sub-woofer
3. **MacArthur** – “John’s vision of God’s throne is **not one of peace and comfort**. Its flashing, glorious, spendorous magnificence **reveals the terrors of God’s judgment. Truly, “our God is a consuming fire.”**
  - a. thunder in Scripture **NEVER** indicates peace and calmness
  - b. this means that God is preparing to one day come and judge this world

### IV. WHAT WAS BEFORE The Throne?

**Vs. 5b-6** – “Before the throne, **seven lamps were blazing**. These are the **seven spirits of God**. Also before the throne there was what looked like a **sea of glass**, clear as crystal.

#### A. The SEVEN LAMPS.

1. John’s dream continues to reveal the judgment of God as seen in the vision of the **seven lamps**.
  - a. in the Old Testament, **lamps were used to lead the Israelites into battle**
  - b. truly, this God, who is seated on the throne, this God who is majestic and all powerful, **IS PREPARING TO GO TO WAR!**
2. Once again, we need to be careful to see God **“ONLY”** as a God of grace. He is as well, **EQUALLY** a God of justice.

#### B. The SEVEN SPIRITS.

1. In the Scriptures, the number seven is the perfect number.
2. The seven spirits represent the **Holy Spirit, WHO WILL COMPLETELY FULFILL THIS UPCOMING JUDGMENT.**

### C. The SEA OF GLASS.

1. In order to understand the sea of glass, we need to realize:
  - a. that in John's day, glass was not clear, as our glass is today
  - b. any glass that was made in John's day had a "cloudiness" to it
2. This glass in heaven, however, is as "clear as crystal."
  - a. you can see right through this glass
  - b. it is a "sea of glass"
3. This sea of glass represents:
  - a. the foundation of heaven is a "crystal sea"
  - b. the meaning of a crystal sea is this:
    1. **THE FOUNDATION OF HEAVEN IS CLEAR AND ABSOLUTELY TRUTHFUL**
    2. the foundation of heaven is unchanging
      - a. unlike the seas on this earth that toss to and fro and is ever changing
      - b. this "sea of glass" is unchanging, not tossing to and fro
      - c. **EVERYTHING THAT GOD IS AND SAYS IS TRUE, REVEALING, AND TRANSPARENT!**
      - d. **SO, DON'T WONDER IF GOD WILL KEEP HIS WORD, ABOUT JUDGMENT, FOR, HE MOST CERTAINLY WILL!**

### V. WHAT WAS DIRECTED TO The Throne?

#### A. The WORSHIP BY THE CREATURES

**Vs. 6b-7** – "In the center, around the throne, **were four living creatures**, and they were **covered with eyes, in front and in back**. The first living creature was like a **lion**, the second was like an **ox**, the third had a face like a **man**, the fourth was like a **flying eagle**."

1. The **description** of the creatures:
  - a. the **lion**
    1. **the king of all wild beasts**
    2. the ruler of the jungle
    3. the strongest of the wild Kingdom
  - b. the **ox**
    1. **the strongest of all domesticated animals**
    2. the animal servant
  - c. the **man**
    1. **the most intelligent of all of God's creatures**
    2. the wisest of all God's creatures
  - d. the **eagle**
    1. **the king of all birds**
    2. the swiftest and most beautiful of all birds
2. The **duty** of the creatures
 

**Vs. 8** – "Each of the four living creatures had **six wings** and was **covered with eyes all around**, even under his wings."

- a. we see these same creatures described in -
    - Isaiah 6:2** - "Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: with **two wings they covered their faces**, with **two they covered their feet**, and with **two they were flying**."
  - b. here was what these individual creatures around the throne of God were created by God to do:
    1. with their **wings**:
      - a. with **two wings they covered their faces BECAUSE** even the most exalted heavenly creatures cannot look on the glory of God without being consumed
      - b. with **two wings they covered their feet**, since they stood on holy ground
      - c. and, with **two wings they constantly fly** around the throne to worship God
    2. with their **eyes**:
      - a. the creatures were covered with eyes, both front and back
      - b. therefore, because of "all of their eyes," they can see all of God's creation, **ALL OF THE TIME**.
      - c. **NEVER WILL THERE BE A TIME THAT THESE CREATURES DO NOT SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING SO THAT THEY CAN "ADEQUATELY" WORSHIP HIM**
3. The **description** by the creatures.
- a. the **holiness of God**

**Vs. 8b** – "Day and night they never stop saying: "**Holy, holy, holy** is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

    1. in English, we emphasize a word by putting it in quotes or with an exclamation mark.
    2. to the Hebrew mind, emphasis was added by using a word twice; here the word holy was repeated not twice but three times
    3. so, to the Hebrew mind, God is not merely holy, but He is **holy, holy, holy**
    4. in a sense, you cannot adequately say the word holy "enough times" to describe God
  - b. the **eternity of God**

**Vs. 8b** – "Day and night they never stop saying: "**Holy, holy, holy** is the Lord God Almighty, who **was**, and **is**, and **is to come**."

    1. and, not only is this God holy
    2. **HE IS ETERNAL**
      - a. He always **was**
      - b. He always **is**
      - c. He always **will be**

## B. The WORSHIP BY THE CREATED.

**Vs. 10-11** – “The **twenty-four elders fall down before him** who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They **lay their crowns before the throne** and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

1. The **realization** of the elders
  - a. The final scene in chapter four of the book of Revelation is of the twenty-four elders falling down prostrate before the throne of God and “**casting their crowns**” before the throne
    1. in the Middle East, it was common for conquered Kings to throw their crowns before the Kings who conquered them
    2. this is more than likely the illustration that John saw
  - b. This is what we, as believers will have the opportunity to do in heaven.
    1. Yes, believers **will** have a crown, **BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT WHO WEARS “THE CROWN” IN HEAVEN**
    2. **Pastor Keith Linkos** – “To cast down your crown is to recognize and declare; **your position and authority is greater than mine. I am here only because you allowed me to be.**”
    3. **J. Vernon McGee** – “Frankly, if we get a crown at all, I think that after we wear it for a while, when the newness wears off, we are going to feel embarrassed. **What in the world are we doing, wearing a crown? The only One worthy up there is the Lord Jesus.** Therefore, we are going to lay our crown at His feet.”
2. the **recognition** of the elders
 

**Vs. 11** - “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, **for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.**”

  - a. Besides recognizing God’s holiness by the creatures, the elders worshipped God because of His creation
  - b. **FOR, THE ELDERS KNEW THAT ONLY GOD ALONE COULD CREATE ALL THAT THERE IS!**
    1. they “knew” that God created the world by His word
    2. and, they know that God created them and the heaven they were inhabited!
3. **WHAT ELSE COULD THEY DO BUT WORSHIP?**

### Conclusion:

1. **Oh, believer, do you realize what God has done for you?**
  - a. God has provided a payment for unholy, ungodly sinners so that we can live forever in heaven.
  - b. A place of total perfection, a place where each of us will never struggle with sin ever again!
  - c. That, **alone**, is worth praising God for!

2. **But, we will not be focusing on our sins or lack of sin**
  - a. Instead, we will be focusing on the power, the majesty, the beauty and the holiness of our great God
  - b. So, if we will worship our God forever in eternity, **WHY DON'T WE WORSHIP GOD NOW?**
  - c. **John Calvin – “Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.”**
3. Noted English poet, **Alfred Lloyd Tennyson**, once said that **Reginald Heber** wrote one of the greatest hymns ever written, basing his text on Revelation 4, “Holy, Holy, Holy”  
**Holy, holy, holy!** All the saints adore Thee,  
**Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;**  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

## QUESTIONS

1. In the Apostle John's vision of heaven, what was the first things that he saw?
  - a. he saw **a door**.  
**Vs. 1** – “After this I looked, and there before me was a **door standing open in heaven**. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."
  - b. he saw **a throne**.  
**Vs. 2** – “At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a **throne in heaven with someone sitting on it**.”
  
2. What do each of these first sightings represent about heaven?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. **Revelation 4:3** speaks of two stones on the throne; jasper and carnelian: Jasper represents God's purity and carnelian represents God's justice. Discuss the character of God based on these two stones.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. John also saw a rainbow encircling God's throne. What do you think this rainbow represents?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Will Christians wear a crown in heaven?  
**Vs. 4** – “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. **They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.**”

6. What do the creatures in verses 6-8 teach us about the proper way to worship God?
  - a. two wings to cover their faces
  - b. two wings to cover their feet
  - c. two wings to fly
  - d. a constant praise of Holy, Holy, Holy
  
7. Based on this text, what do we need to do to become better worshippers of God?