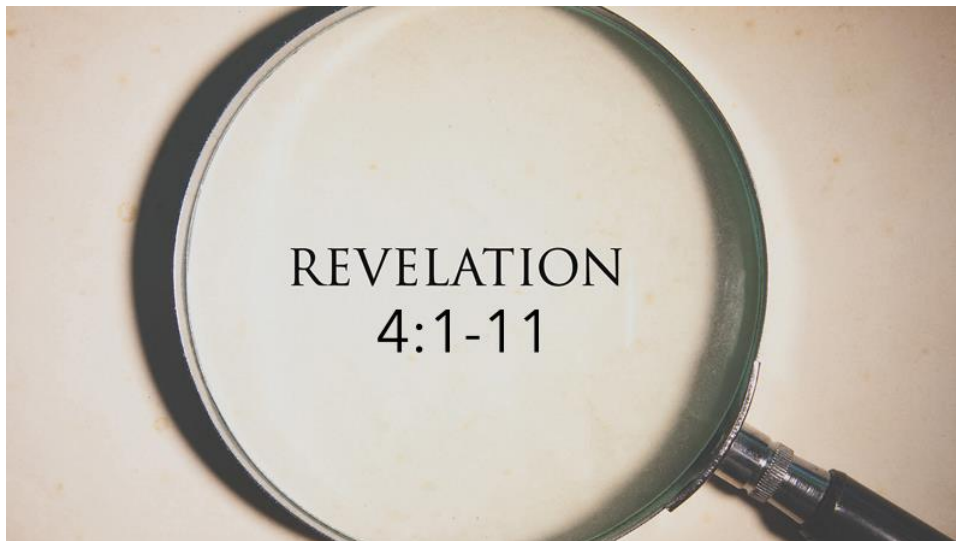


Sooke Baptist Church
Sunday, November 29, 2020

Look! A Throne

Revelation 4

9am, Facebook Livestream
Noon, YouTube



v.1 - After this I looked...

...and **there before me** was a door standing open in heaven...

v.2 -At once I was in the Spirit...

...and **there before me** was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

...there before me...

This phrase...used in both of these verses... is in the imperative mood.
What this means is that John is not making a statement...

LOOK!
~~...there before me...~~

...but is giving a command to the reader.

After this I looked and....“Look!”... a door standing open in heaven.



Things are not as they seem.

The two realms – heaven and earth – are closer than we could imagine.



At once I was in the Spirit... and "Look!"... a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

This throne... is mentioned 10 times in Revelation 4, and 5 times in Revelation 5, and another twenty-one times in the rest of the book.

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The throne in heaven is the most dominant theme in the Revelation.

The throne is the key to understanding the Revelation.

This throne and the One who sits on it... is the unseen reality that shapes life on earth.

Things are not as they seem.

v.1b - As John looked at the open door, he heard a voice, which he knew...and which he identified for the reader.

It was the same voice that had spoken to him in chapter 1:10... the voice that sounded like...



... a trumpet – meaning the voice was loud, distinct, and clear.

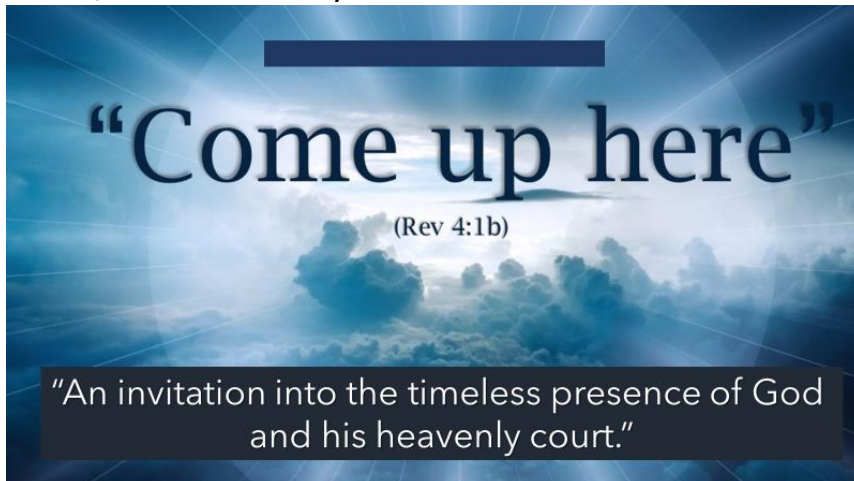
What did the voice say to John?

v.1c - Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.



What does that mean?

It was, as GK Beale says...



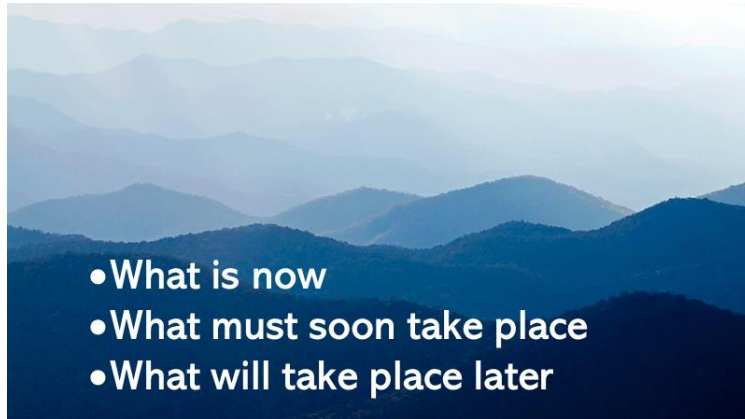
p.100.

I will show you what must take place after this.

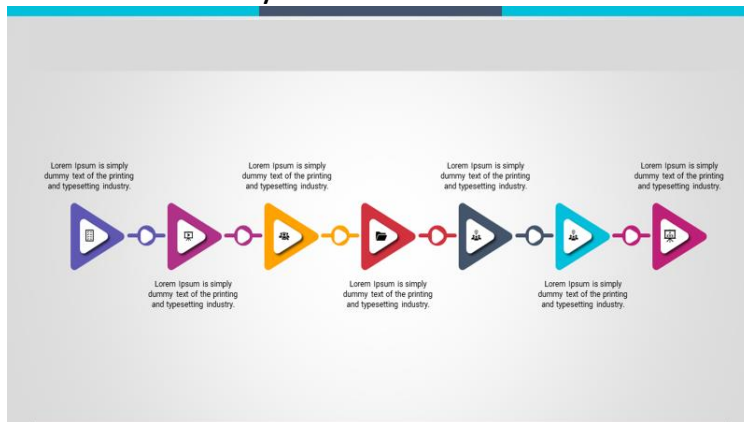
John wrote in Revelation 1:1, “The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants **what must soon take place.**”

Then in 1:19, Jesus said to John, “Write, therefore, what you have seen, **what is now** and **what will take place later.**”

In the visions given to John, he saw... and the reader is told of three different time frames...



That said, an important key to understanding the Revelation is to realize that the book does not lay out...



... a linear timeline of the future, proceeding from now...to soon...to later.

John wrote down the things he heard and saw in the order in which he heard and saw them.

- 4:1 – After this I looked...
- 7:1 – After this I saw...
- 7:4 – Then I heard...
- 7:9 – After this I looked...
- 8:2 – And I saw...
- 8:13 – As I watched, I heard...
- 9:13 – I heard a voice...
- 9:17 – I saw in my vision...
- 10:1 – Then I saw...
- 10:8 – Then the voice I had heard...

12:10 – Then I heard a loud voice...
13:1 – And I saw...
13:11 – Then I saw...
14:1 – Then I looked...
14:2 – And I heard...
14:6 – Then I saw...
14:13 – Then I heard...
14:14 – I looked, and there before me...
15:1 – I saw...
15:2 – And I saw...

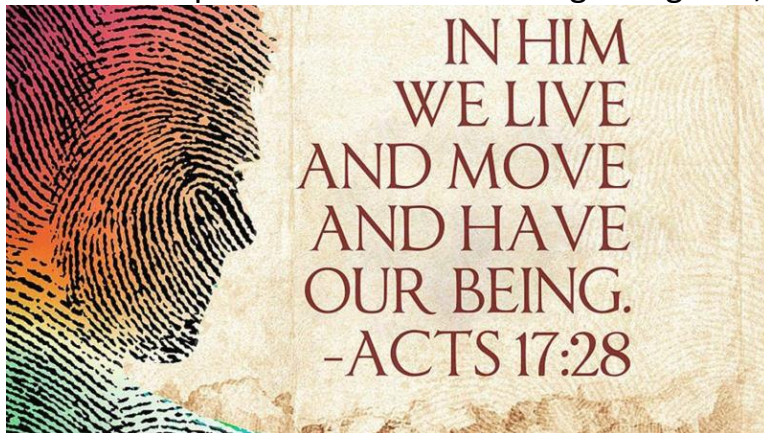
15:5 – After this I looked, and I saw...
16:1 – Then I heard...
16:7 – And I heard...
16:13 – Then I saw...
17:3 – There I saw...
17:6 – I saw...
18:1 – After this I saw...
18:4 – Then I heard...
19:1 – After this I heard...
19:6 – Then I heard...

19:11 – I saw...
19:17 – And I saw...
19:19 – Then I saw...
20:1 – And I saw...
20:4 – I saw...
20:11 – Then I saw...
20:12 – And I saw...
21:1 – Then I saw...
21:2 – I saw...
21:3 – And I heard...

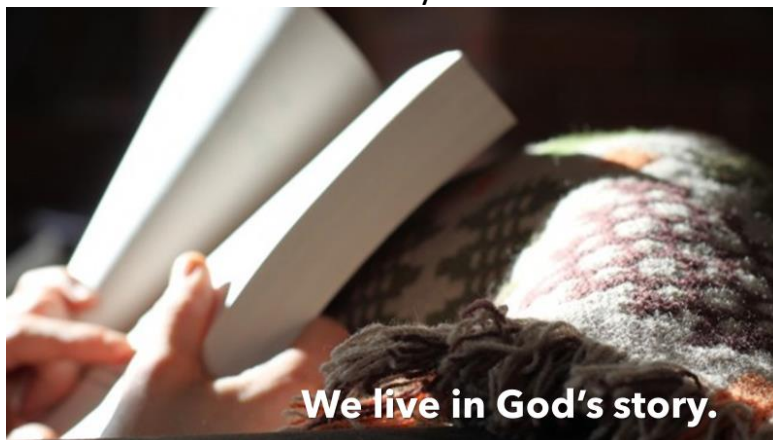
I say it again...John wrote down the things he heard and saw in the order in which he heard and saw them.

Repeatedly, it was both shown and told to John that God is sovereign and active in the world... that he never reacts to the initiatives of evil, but rather, he directs history, moving his purposes forward at his time and in the way he chooses.

When Paul spoke to the Athenians regarding God, he said...



The Revelation is emphatic...
God doesn't live in our story. Rather...



God doesn't exist to fulfill our plans; rather he invites us to participate in the fulfilling of his.

These unseen realities that were revealed to John, shape how God's people follow Jesus; they provide for us the context in which we live in this present time.

v.2 – At once I was in the Spirit...

What does that mean?

This expression ("in the Spirit") is used by John four different times in the Revelation.

1:10 – On the Lord's Day I was **in the Spirit**...

4:2 – At once I was **in the Spirit**...

17:3 – Then the angel carried me away **in the Spirit** into a wilderness.

21:10 – And [the angel] carried me away **in the Spirit** to a mountain great and high...

Ezekiel the prophet had a similar experience to that of John.

Ezekiel

2:1-2. He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, **the Spirit came into me** and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

3:12. **Then the Spirit lifted me up**, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound as the glory of the LORD rose from the place where it was standing.

3:14. **The Spirit then lifted me up** and took me away...

3:24. **Then the Spirit came into me** and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said...

In the Spirit, John was enabled to see and to hear the plans and purposes of God and to experience the presence and power of God, just as Ezekiel and other prophets had.

In Revelation 4 and 5, as best as he could, with the limitations of human language, John endeavored to describe the indescribable... the One who sat on the throne of heaven encircled by the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders.

What John saw and described is meant to grip our imagination, and to center our lives in the One who is worthy!

Who is the One that sits on the throne?

Read v.3.

The One on the Throne of Heaven:

- * is beautiful, majestic and radiant
- * is merciful and just

- The One on the throne...whom John saw is beautiful, majestic and radiant.
- The rainbow that encircles his throne assures that he keeps his promise...because he is merciful and just.

Read v.8.

The One on the Throne of Heaven:

- * is beautiful, majestic and radiant
- * is merciful and just
- * is holy
- * is almighty
- * is eternal

- The One on the throne...whom John saw is holy.
This is the essential, fundamental attribute of God – he is absolutely pure.
- The One on the throne...whom John saw, in addition to being holy, has “all” might... and power and strength.
- The One on the throne...whom John saw is eternal – he is... he had no beginning, and he will have no end.

Read v.11.

The One on the Throne of Heaven:

- * is beautiful, majestic and radiant
- * is merciful and just
- * is holy
- * is almighty
- * is eternal
- * is the Creator

- The One on the throne...whom John saw is the Creator, and he is the One who at the return of Jesus will recreate... making all things new. DJ, p.133.

As John looked into heaven, he described what he saw from four different perspectives:

- Surrounding the throne
- From the throne
- In front of the throne
- In the center, around the throne

Read v.4.



Who are these elders?

Tom Wright, Darryl Johnson, GK Beale, and others believe the elders are angelic beings, who similar to the angels assigned to every church, represent the church of Jesus in its entirety –in the OT and the NT era... the twelve patriarchs, representing the church before the coming of Jesus, and the twelve apostles, representing the church after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Beale, p.102; DJ, p.139.

Their white garments symbolize their holiness.

Their thrones and crowns indicate the authority entrusted to them to represent the redeemed.

What is it that the elders do?

- They worship God – Revelation 4:10-11; 5:9-10; 14.
- They bring the prayers of God's people on the earth and present them to God – Revelation 5:8.
- Some of them also interpret for John the things he saw – Revelation 5:5; 7:13-14.

Krodel, p.155.

Read v.5a.



This imagery impresses upon the reader that the One on the throne... is the Judge of all the earth.

Three more times in the Revelation...this same imagery is used:

...after the seven seals are opened, and

...after the seven trumpets are sounded, and

...after the seven bowls are poured out.

Revelation

8:5 - ...and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

11:19 - ...and there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

16:18-20 – Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunders and a severe earthquake...From the sky huge hailstones fell...

- It is from the throne... all things will be made right.
- It is from the throne... that all wrongs will be undone, and all wrong doers will be held accountable.
- It is from the throne... the reign of darkness will be ended, and sin banished so that it can never again influence or harm.

The fact that in this present time sinners can draw near to this Majestic Judge through Jesus Christ... is the most glorious opportunity offered to the human race. And because that is so, the fact that some reject God's offer of amnesty is the tragedy of tragedies.

Read v.5b.



The number seven represents completeness, perfection. John saw in front of the throne... the Holy Spirit in all his completeness – and please note – **“he was blazing.”**

We'll dig deeper into this next week, but the book of Revelation impresses upon the reader that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, though three, are one.

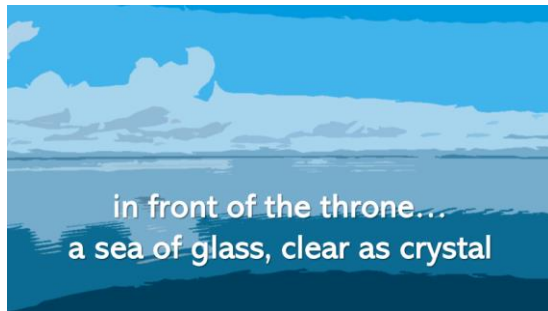
I love how Kevin DeYoung puts it ...

**“The Father, Son and Spirit
all occupy the same divine space.**

**The three are always and forever
with and in one another,
yet without merging,
without blending
and without confusion.”**

Kevin DeYoung

Read v.6a.



What does this mean?

I quote from Darryl Johnson:

The sea represents all that seeks to overcome, undo, and destroy the work of God. In Revelation 13, the dragon stood on the shore of the sea, as a beast emerged from the sea and was empowered with the dragon's authority. The fact that the scene in Revelation 4 portrayed the sea like glass, communicates that before God's and his throne evil is subdued. p.136-137

Later, in Revelation 15, standing beside the sea of glass, John saw a vision of the people of God who had overcome, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb:

**"Great and marvelous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations.
4 Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory
to your name? For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."**

Revelation 15:3-4

The location of where the people of God sang is significant.

They overcame...by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony!

But there is even more!

What is truly breathtaking is that when John saw the new heaven and the new earth in chapter 21, he wrote....

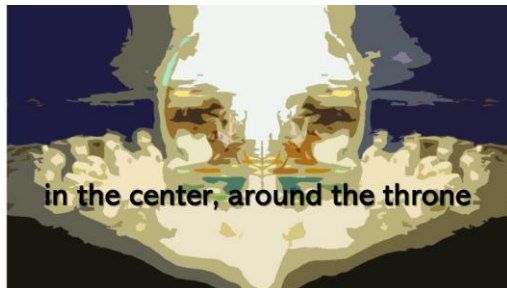
**Then I saw "a new heaven and
a new earth," for the first
heaven and the first earth had
passed away, and there was no
longer any sea.**

(Revelation 21:1 NIV)

Richard Bauckham explains what this meant.

When God makes all things new, he will take his creation....**"beyond the threat of evil."** Theology, p.53

Read v.6b-8



The four living creatures bear some similarity to the ones the prophet Ezekiel saw in his first vision – 1:5-11, and also the vision seen by Isaiah – 6:1-7.

Like the twenty-four elders they too surround the throne but are at the center. Who are they and what do they represent?

GK Beale explains:

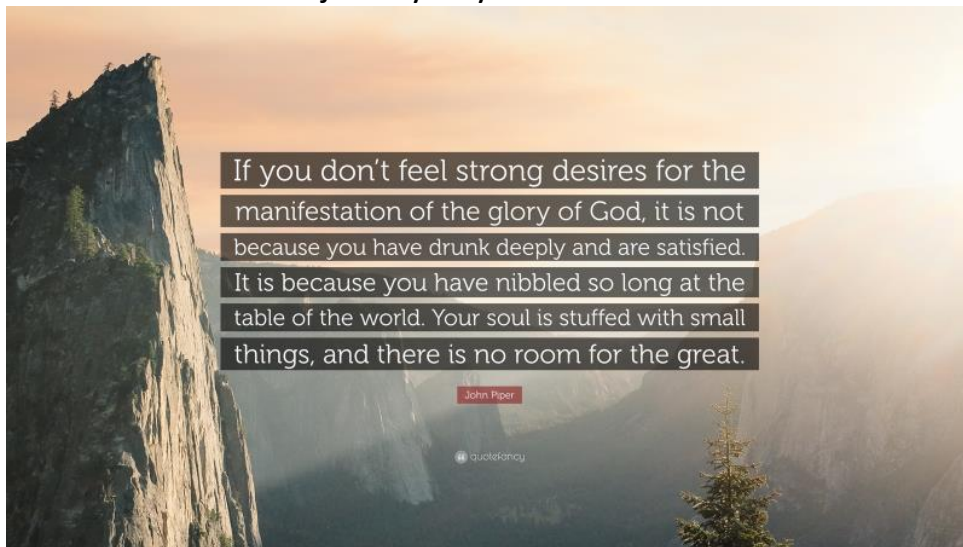
It is likely that these angelic beings...represent the whole created order of animate life. The living creatures are servants of the Lamb...and as such, they inaugurate the judgments upon rebellious mankind (see 6:1) and continue to mediate these judgments until the final consummation. p.104

The rescue of God will be complete – of humanity and of creation!
See Romans 8:19-21.

This is what John saw as he peered into the unseen reality of heaven.
And as I earlier said, what John saw and described is meant to grip the imagination of the reader

The question that the Revelation asks of every reader is – who do you worship?
Who is your God?
Who is at the center of your life?

The answer to this question is crucial.
It determines the trajectory of your life – now and in the one that follows death.



This is a challenging statement.
It asks us...have we feasted on God? Are we satisfied in him?
The creatures of heaven are?
What about us?

Our hearts were made to worship but one.
And there is only one who is worthy of our devotion.

- **The Holy One.**
- **The Eternal One.**
- **The Creator.**
- **The Judge.**
- **The Almighty One.**
- **The Beautiful One.**
- **The Faithful One.**

Eugene Peterson says:

Failure to worship the triune God, whom heaven declares is worthy... consigns one to a life of spasms and jerks, at the mercy of every advertisement, every seduction, every siren.

Without worship of the living God, one will live a manipulated and manipulating life, moving in either frightened panic, alarmed by shadows or deluded lethargy, soothed by placebos.

Eugene Peterson

p.60.

You and I are saved to be...

- **Solid**
- **Steady**
- **Confident**
- **Trusting**
- **Peaceable**
- **Hopeful**
- **Joyful**

This chapter impresses upon us that the purpose of life is “to know and to love, to serve and to enjoy the great King of Heaven! DJ, p.140.

Is this the reason, the purpose of your life?

The followers of Jesus are a worshipping people.

We worship with our mouths... and our hearts.

We worship with our minds... and our bodies.

We worship with our words... and with our deeds.

To see the One who is on the Throne, who lives forever and ever... is to worship him...to lay everything down at his feet.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote...

Jeremiah 17:1

**A glorious throne,
exalted from the beginning,
is the place of our sanctuary.
Lord, you are our hope...**