



Revelation 4

“Real” Reality

Revelation 4 gives us a glimpse behind the curtain to another dimension, another universe. It's as if our world, the life we live—coming to and going from work, doing life, being married, being single, parenting, paying the bills, etc.—it's as if our world was this side alley and then we discover Main Street. Revelation 4 is Main Street. It's a reality more real, more valid, and more authentic than anything we could ever experience. Revelation 4 is our future. In Revelation 1-3, we saw the world of the seven churches—their lives, their strength and growth areas. Revelation 4 invites us into God's world, where we see creatures whose sole existence is to glorify and worship the Almighty!

The Apostle John strains at using language to describe the indescribable!

One of the most common words John uses is “like.” Remember this!

v. 3—the One enthroned had the *appearance* of jasper and carnelian; a rainbow *resembling* an emerald surrounded the throne.

v. 4—24 other thrones/24 elders = probably the elders are angels who are identified with the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles, representing all the people of God, the entire community of the redeemed in both Old and New Testaments.

v. 5—the seven lamps = the sevenfold Spirit of God; that is, the Holy Spirit.

v. 6—*like* a sea of glass, clear as crystal = dealing with God's awesome vastness, his transcendence and his holiness that separate him from his creation. In one sense it is like glass, reflecting the magnificent and kaleidoscopic colors of the throne room. In another sense it is radiating awesome holiness.

v. 7—four living creatures represent all of animate life.

<i>Like</i> a lion	symbolizing the noblest of all that breath
<i>Like</i> an ox	symbolizing the strongest of all that breath
<i>Like</i> a man	symbolizing the wisest of all that breath
<i>Like</i> a flying eagle	symbolizing the swiftest of all that breath

Covered with eyes—this means that these creatures are all-knowing; they act as agents of the Almighty. They see the suffering of God's people; and they also see the evil that will one day be punished when Satan's overthrow is completed.

Six wings—swiftness to do the will of the Almighty!

Two hymns: God is holy! (v. 8) God is worthy! (v. 11)

Fall down before Him . . . Lay their crowns before the throne = kneeling and worshipping are the best uses of the resources God gives us.

Realities we need to accept

1. Revelation 4 is happening right now. Furthermore, it is more important than anything else in the universe or anything that is going on in your life. It's more important than your greatest achievements and it's more important than your hardest problems. It's more important than your health or your cancer or your victories or your defeats. It's more important than the future of our country, the economy, or the war on terror.
2. Revelation 4 is saying that God is sovereign. Period. It was a direct assault upon the Roman Empire and the throne room of Caesar, who was worshiped as a deity and to whom patriotic Roman citizens paid homage in those seven cities and throughout the empire. The book of Revelation is the most explicitly counter-imperial book in the Bible. It asserts in no uncertain terms that Jesus Christ is Lord, Caesar, Master, King, and Supreme over all. He is the "Pantokrator"—the Almighty Ruler of All! Jesus is supreme over Mohammed, Buddha, & Moses. He is King over North America, South America, Central America, Europe, China, India, Russia, Africa, Australia—over every nation on earth. He rules the Taliban. He is sovereign over Al Qaeda.
3. Revelation 4 is unveiled to John by Jesus himself. Apart from Jesus, there is no reason to believe the truth of these verses. And why? Because Jesus said that He came from heaven. *"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man."* (John 3:13 NIV) Why believe the reality of Revelation 4 apart from the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus? But why dismiss it given the reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?
4. Revelation 4 invites you to participate in life that is truly life. The fact is, what we see in Revelation 4 is what fullness of life is all about. And it's going to happen with or without us. We are not center stage. Jesus is. And the good news is that by faith in Christ, in his living and dying as our substitute, we are allowed into this most sacred arena to be swept up in glorifying the greatness of God. People go to the Grand Canyon to be amazed at the glory of Creation. Revelation 4 calls us to be swept up in the glory of the Canyon-Creator!
5. When we glorify God together in weekly worship, we are reminded that heaven is our ultimate home. Don't get too comfortable here! This is not home!
6. "What we revere, we resemble, either for ruin or restoration!" (G.K. Beale)
7. The purpose of Revelation 4-5 is to assure the believers who are suffering that God is in fact sovereign and whatever His people are facing will culminate in their redemption and vindication of their faith through the punishment of their persecutors.
8. True worship is about clarifying where our loyalties lie. Where our allegiance is. Worship reminds us that we do not owe our ultimate allegiance to our colleges, governments, sports teams, jobs, even members of our family; or human rulers—rather to Jesus Christ, Caesar of All.