

A View into Heaven

Revelation 4:1-11

Sept 30-Oct 1, 2017

What is heaven like? Many people have pondered this and would love to have a view into heaven. Is it a place where there are beautiful golf courses, or the most perfect fishing lakes or perhaps a place where people eat the most incredible delectable food and never gain weight!!

In Revelation 4, John is taken up to heaven and instructed to write what he sees. The problem is that there are no words to adequately capture what his eyes take in. When we read these words, it makes our hearts yearn for more.

John is shown the things which must quickly take place. In other words, John is shown the future events of the last days. But first, John is given a vision of heaven itself.

We are brought with John into the scene before him. If we could only see what his eyes saw, but we take in his view, his description of what he saw and gain insight for our own lives, and be changed by it.

There is a phrase I have come to truly appreciate; “We are changed in the presence of a Holy God.” These verses draw us into God’s presence and give us a deeper understanding of His heart and character.

John describes the scene, there was a throne standing in heaven and One sitting on the throne, radiant in glory. Around the throne were 24 thrones and upon the thrones were 24 elders sitting, clothed in white with golden crowns on their heads.

There were also four living creatures before the throne who never cease to say, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.”

Holiness is the character of God and He wants us to be changed to be like Him in heart and character, so there is much to learn from understanding these verses that describe God.

The four living creatures are angels that are nothing like anything we can imagine, but they represent the nature of Jesus Christ.

The prophet Ezekiel had a similar description of the throne in heaven and Jewish Rabbis taught that the four faces in Ezekiel’s vision represent God’s greatest creations. They were also represented on the ensign, the standard, used by each of the lead tribes when Israel camped in the desert:

East	Judah	Lion
West	Ephraim	Ox
South	Reuben	Man
North	Dan	Eagle

The early church fathers taught that these faces represent the qualities of Jesus Christ that He would desire in each of us. Some have also suggested that they represent how Jesus is presented in each of the Gospels.

In Matthew, Jesus is seen as the King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In Mark, He is seen as the servant, represented by the ox. In Luke, He is seen as the Son of Man, represented by the face of a man in Revelation; and then John, He is seen as the Son of God, represented by the eagle.

I. Have the Heart of a Lion

- Jesus is called the Lion from the tribe of Judah, so the connection to the heart of Jesus can be seen in the face of this living creature.
- The qualities of a lion are clear; power, authority, strength, boldness.
- These majestic symbols, representing the character and nature of Jesus, also represent God's heart for us. He transforms us into His image, his character, and His nature.

A. Authority requires boldness

- In Scripture, authority is sometimes represented by a key. The one who holds the key has the authority to open the door.

Revelation 1:17-18, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hell.”

- Jesus said to Peter, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”
- All authority has been given unto Jesus and He promised to be with us even to the end of the age...

Matthew 28:18-20, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

2 Corinthians 3: 12, Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech.

- After the resurrection, a great revival broke out in Jerusalem. The Jewish

leaders had Peter and the others arrested, but an angel opened the gates of the prison and the disciples went right back to teaching in the temple. So they had them arrested again and brought before the Council... But a certain Jewish leader named Gamaliel corrected them...

Acts 5:38-39, “If what these men are doing should be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”

B. Godly authority requires full commitment

- There is a time to take a stand and not to compromise. Jesus repeatedly said to the churches, “He who overcomes...”
- To overcome means to hold fast to what you have, it means to keep His word until the end.

Illus- Before 8-track players and cassettes, in the days of LP albums, the cover of the LP was one of the best parts of the album and Keith Green’s album cover “No Compromise” stands as one of the most powerful. The scene is that of a crowd before Nebuchadnezzar and everyone bowing down before him, but

one meek, yet powerful man stands with no compromise.

- You have to know where to take a godly stand, but there are times when we must draw a line in the sand.

2 Samuel 23:11-12, Now after him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered into a troop where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines. But he took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it and struck the Philistines; and the Lord brought about a great victory.

II. Serve with the Power of an Ox

- The ox is the most powerful of the beasts of burden and represents the heart of the Lord in serving. It's the character of God revealed.
- Jesus said, "He who desires to be first, let him be the last, and he who desires to be the greatest, let him be the servant of all. In the same way, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

A. Be steady and faithful

- The ox is steady and faithful in its purpose.

Illus – If a farmer had to plow in difficult ground, the animal of choice would be the ox. He is powerful, sure-footed and steady.

1 Corinthians 15:58, Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

- One of the qualities of an ox is that he does the work without complaining. Unlike a donkey, he works without an attitude – no drama.

Illus - When Jesus visited the home of Martha and Mary, Martha complained because her sister Mary wasn't helping with the preparations and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

Instead of telling me to help, Jesus corrected Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things..."

B. Do the difficult things

- In every house and in every ministry, there are jobs no one wants to do, but those with servant hearts are willing to do the difficult things that other people are unwilling to do.
- Dealing with our sins could not have been a pleasant task.

Illus – I remember when we had our first baby. I knew there would be a few tasks that were, let’s just say, rather unpleasant, but I decided I would go for it. That is, until Jordi decided she wanted to use cloth diapers... I thought to myself, “There’s a limit and we just hit it.” But, sure enough, it wasn’t long before...

- We are getting closer to the last days and difficult days are ahead. Those who have the heart of a servant will be spiritually valuable.

2 Timothy 3:1-2, But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

How do you know if you have the heart of a servant?

- By how you react when people treat you like one. And when you find true pleasure in the serving.

Illus – I was reading Farm and Ranch Magazine one time and I remember a story about a farmer that plowed with a team of two horses. One died so he decided to retire the other one and buy a tractor...

- In the last days, the Antichrist arises who will deceive many because it will appear as though he can provide answers to the world's great problems; which strongly suggests that the world will encounter great turbulence leading up to the last days.
- Those will be days when servant hearted people must arise to help others.

III. God Desires both Humility and Greatness

- These living creatures before the throne are those which are the closest to the presence of God and they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty..."
- The 24 elders sitting on thrones which represent authority, were dressed in white with golden crowns on their heads... But

they fell down before Him who sits on the throne and cast their crowns before the throne.

- There's greatness, power, and authority in each of them, but also humility.

A. The face of man is humility

- Each of these living creatures before the throne represent the nature and character of God.
- Is humility an aspect of God's character? When Christ became a man, it was an act of greatest humility.

Philippians 2:7-8, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- Glory and honor are given to those who understand the value of humility...

Matthew 23:11-12, "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

B. The eagle is the majesty of God

- The fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The symbol is power and majesty and victory.

Psalm 91:1, 4, He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.... He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and the bulwark.

- The eagle is the only animal that can look directly at the sun and not damage its eyes; as Jesus is the One who can perceive the Father in all His glory.

Illus – The eagle is the majesty of soaring high by the lift of great wind. It knows the wind that lifts and it knows the wind that flows downward.

The Holy Spirit is “the wind” which is the power of God and we are in God’s majesty when we walk by and live by the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 40:31, Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.