

God's Sovereign Authority and Supreme Worthiness of the Lamb

Recap the outline

=> Read Revelation 1:19 - "Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this."

- The things that are - revealed in the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2-3
- The things that are to take place after this - everything else, chapters 4-22

=> What do you think when you hear the term "afterlife"?

=> How is it represented in culture? What are common misconceptions?

=> How is it represented in your faith?

=> What do you know and believe?

=> Why "must these things take place"?

In the Bible we find 2 who have had the privilege of visiting Heaven (others went to Heaven physically but stayed there or didn't talk about it when they came back)

- Paul (2 Corinthians 12) - shown the third Heaven but forbidden to speak of what he saw
- John (Revelation) - shown the end times and commanded to write it down

=> Read Revelation 4

Setting the scene

Has anyone ever seen A Christmas Carol? This scene reminds me of Marley appearing to Scrooge.

- Who is speaking?

- Son of man, v1 ("*speaking like a trumpet*")
- Where are we?
 - Heaven, v1-2 (Ezekiel 1:1, Acts 7:56)
 - Third Heaven (1st - atmosphere, 2nd - space)
- What does the scene look like?
 - Majestic. Beyond that, though
 - Sardius and Jasper were the first and last stones on the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20) representing the firstborn (Reuben) and lastborn (Benjamin)
 - Possibly depicting God's covenant relationship with Israel
 - 7 torches, contrast with 7 lampstands. This is outdoors, torches are more fierce than the gentle burning lamps
 - Sea of glass - crystal (Exodus 24:10, Ezekiel 1:22, 26)
 - Heaven is brilliant
- When?
 - "After this" / "After these things" - this is a 2nd vision that was given to John after his first vision beginning in Rev. 1:10
 - => Can we discern when the things in this vision are?
- Who is there?
 - *One seated on the throne* - God the Father, Lord, the Creator
 - => Read Daniel 7:9-10
 - => Read Ezekiel 1:26-28
 - *24 elders on thrones* - Who is this?
 - Crowns - victors' crowns (Greek στέφανος - garland, wreath, victor's crown)
 - White robes and palm branches - victory, ref. Jesus riding into Jerusalem

- Wiersbe - Unlikely angels - angels not numbered, not crowned and enthroned, elders are distinguished from angels
- MacArthur - Joint rule with the Son. White garments and golden crowns (like Jesus) seem to represent the redeemed. Not Israel, their resurrection and glory comes at the end of the tribulation. Not tribulation saints since they have not been converted either. Elders are already in Heaven when the tribulation saints arrive (Rev. 7:11-14).
- Wiersbe - 24 courses of priests in the OT temple
- MacArthur - 24, completion and representation, 24 offices in the sanctuary representing the 24 courses of Levitical priests (1 Chronicles 24:4-5, 7-18)
- MacArthur - some split into 2 groups of 12 - Israel and the church, but no exegetical reason to do so. They always appear as a single group.
- Arguments for them not being angels
 - Angels never sit on thrones in scripture or are pictured reigning over anything, they're warriors and ministering spirits
 - Greek πρεσβύτερος is never used to refer to angels, always men (older men generally) and the rulers of Israel and the church
 - White garments are typically the dress of believers (letter to Sardis - promise to be clothed in white, at the marriage ceremony the bride - church - will be clothed in white)
 - Crowns never promised to angels in scripture
- This is the church. Only the church is complete and glorified at this point, singing the song of redemption.
- *Seven spirits of God* - descriptive of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness (Isaiah 11:2, Zechariah 4:1-10)
- *Four living creatures*
 - Where are these creatures?
 - Closer to God than the elders and angels
 - => Read Ezekiel 1:4-14, 10:20-22 (features of Cherubim)

- => Read Isaiah 6 (praise of Seraphim)
- Maybe Cherubim?
- Represent the wisdom of God (covered in eyes) and proclaim His holiness
- What's happening?
 - Worship
 - Four creatures, never ceasing, "Holy, holy, holy..."
 - 24 elders fall down before Him and worship, casting their crowns before the throne, proclaiming His worthiness
 - Judgement is about to begin
 - Thunder and lightning
 - This is not a place of peace and comfort

=> If this is a glimpse into what it looks like in Heaven, what, can we expect?

- Perfection / sanctification
 - Beauty, majesty, tranquility (jasper, carnelian/sardius, white, gold, rainbow, circle, sea of glass)
- Worship. 2 aspects of worship are seen
 - They worship the Creator (Ch. 4), God the Father
 - The worship the Redeemer (Ch. 5), God the Son
- Judgement
 - Lightning and thunder start
 - The world does not like to focus on this

=> Imagine actually seeing Jesus and actually being in His presence for eternity. What thoughts and feelings come to your mind? (MacArthur)

=> What does it mean to you to worship God?