

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***The King of The Kingdom*** **Revelation 4-5**

**Keywords:** Atonement, transcendence, heaven, kingship, gospel, judgment

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Too often we fall into the trap that the gospel is all about us. As a result we diminish the great, more glorious purposes of God in placing His Son on the Cross. In this sermon Pastor Henry takes the listeners into the very throne room of God to gain a small glimpse of the glories that are there in the person of God and the great hope of the Lion who was the Lamb.

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. What is the gospel? What does it exist to do? Why does God bring the good news to us? Why are we commanded to believe it?
  - 1. Questions like these must be worked through in our hearts and minds continue together as a church.
  - 2. And over the next two weeks I want to try to put some more muscle and flesh to these questions until they no longer are questions, but they become motivations for us to live and breathe the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- B. For so long the gospel has been presented in a very individualistic way.
  - 1. In other words, how you can go to heaven. Or how you can be saved from the wrath of God due to your sins.
  - 2. And in a sense, a key sense, that is correct. But it is not the ultimate sense.
  - 3. And if we don't have the ultimate sense firmly in our hearts then all that I am teaching will be of little value.
  - 4. We will fail to see that there is something far more glorious than getting saved.
- C. Hear the words of Peter, (1 Peter 3:18) "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, **in order** that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;"

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1. This is the glory of the gospel—to be brought to God.
  2. It is not heaven, it is not forgiveness, it is to see and worship God.
  3. The sin separates us FROM God. That is the great horror. It is not so much that it brings the wrath of God upon us but that it separates us from true joy and life.
  4. Death is the opposite of God, who is life in its fulness.
- D. How do we see the fulness of the Gospel? **Two things need to occur.**
1. First, we need to have a *high view of God*. We need a vision of God that blows away those small visions that we usually keep in our minds.
  2. Second, we need to see how the gospel speaks of something far grander than going to heaven.
- E. Let's deal with that first point today and the second point next week.
- F. Read Revelation 4-5.

## ***Propositional Statement***

Through the use of powerful, apocalyptic language John shows us both the utter separateness of God toward His Creation and His great nearness through Jesus Christ. In all of this we see the incredible importance to the Cross of Jesus, for it was there that all justice, mercy and life shall flow.

## II. Prefatory remarks:

- A. Symbolism is very helpful when you deal with transcendent things.

Example, imagine you are transported to a remote culture in the deep Amazon jungle. Incredibly backwards and ancient in their practices, with essentially no contact with the outside world.

You spend years learning their language and now you are trying to now communicate with them. Now you have to try to explain to them electricity. Now, how do you do this? You will be forced to use symbolic language. The challenge is

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not their stupidity, but the difficulty in describing what they have never experienced electricity in anything but lightening.)

**Remember this as you read for if it is hard to do this among humans, describing things humans have made, then how much more is it a challenge to describe the very throne room of God?**

- B. Apocalyptic literature.
  - 1. A very unique genre into which Revelation falls.
  - 2. Characteristics:
    - a. Mixed metaphors—if you try to separate them, you mess up the meaning of the text. Example is lion and lamb.
    - b. There are symbols that this genre uses that almost always means certain things.
      - (1) “Horn” = King or kingdom.
      - (2) You will see repeatedly the term “like.” We must see that these are not literal terms.
      - (3) Another example is the number 7.
    - c. Steeped in Old Testament language.
      - (1) Revelation has almost no Old Testament references.
      - (2) Yet it is replete with Old Testament images and allusions.
      - (3) This creates some challenges if you are not well-versed in the Old Testament.

### III. Chapter 4 sets the stage for chapter 5.

- A. To miss this misses its purpose; they go together and they prepare us for the rest of the book.
- B. These two chapters show a picture of the heavenly court of God as He prepares to launch His massive and final program to bring to

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completion His work against sin. He is preparing to create the new heavens and earth.

## C. Chapter 4 The text:

1. There was a door opened in heaven and John was invited to enter to see and learn what must take place. . . .
  - a. Notice also **the certainty of the words**. These things shall take place, they “must.”
  - b. This is part of the blessing of 1:3—these things are certain so hear them and heed them.
2. 4:2.
  - a. ‘ . . . come up.’
    - (1) It is basic apocalyptic language that is consistently used to speak of the writer having a vision.
    - (2) One with a voice of a trumpet. **Who is this? [1:10—it was Christ].**
    - (3) And John is now invited into the very throne room of God.
3. What does John witness?
  - a. The absolute centrality and majesty of our Lord.
    - (1) “Throne” is a key word in Revelation. It is used 45 times in this book and only 11 times in the rest of the New Testament.
    - (2) It speaks of control, of sovereignty, of power. God is in control. We must realize that no matter how powerful the “thrones” on earth may be, they are all under THE THRONE.
    - (3) John may be exiled. He may be suffering. The Church may be being persecution. But God is seated in absolute authority.

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- b. The grandeur of God's throne is made all the more glorious by the presence of other thrones (4).
  - (1) 24 elders—a much talked about topic.
    - (a) Many will say this represents the Church.
    - (b) Others will say that the number 24 represents the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles, representing the totality of the people of God.
    - (c) There is the view that this represents the Old Testament priestly orders.
    - (d) Other see these as angelic beings. The argument here is that in apocalyptic literature that angels are usually present in the visions to interpret the vision.
      - i) This last one is probably the best view.
      - ii) Note the way they interpret in 5:5.
      - iii) In each other passage they are referenced they are grouped with other angels and so they are probably a subgroup of angels, like the 4 creatures, the seraphim, etc.
  - (2) The purpose of the elders are to worship and praise God.
    - (a) They are enhancing the throne of God. To try to approach the throne of God requires you first go past these many smaller thrones all pointing to the greatness of the main throne.
    - (b) Notice the other images that are presented that **help create distance** between John and the throne of God.

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- i)      Lightening and thunder.
  - a)      An allusion of the giving of the Law on the mountain (cf. Exodus 19:16).
  - b)      But it also gives the image of a fierce, powerful thunderstorm that is awe-inspiring.
  - c)      The forces of nature unleashed are the most basic expression of power.
- ii)     Seven lamps.
  - a)      Not lampstands of chapter 1, these are torches.
  - b)      This speaks of the Spirit.
- iii)    Sea of glass.
  - a)      “sea” in Jewish apocalyptic literature would represent chaos.
  - b)      The bible frequently speaks of the sea in negative terms, as an adversary, a destructive force.
  - c)      What are some ways you can think of where this occurs? Creation account, Jonah, and the Red Sea are examples.
  - d)      The point of this is to describe the fallen creation.
  - e)      21:1, notice the very first thing about the New Creation. . . .
  - f)      And it again separates us from God, for we are still in this sea.

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- (c) **The point is that God is very, very great and is quite removed from man.**
  - i) This is all setting us up for chapter 5.
  - ii) We cannot come to grips with the glory of the grace of God that He would invite us to behold Him (much less adopt us into His family! Right past all the angels!) without first grasping his transcendence.
  - iii) What are some thoughts that are coming up in your mind as you look at this chapter regarding God?
    - a) Consider the serenity of God, not worried, not agitated.
    - b) Consider the contentment of God.
    - c) Consider the utter lack of need for us.
- c. We witness the highest angelic beings overseeing the worship of God.
  - (1) The images are a conglomeration of the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel.
    - (a) Strange images.
    - (b) They probably represent four key attributes of God—kingship, strength, intelligence, either the speed to execute God’s commands, or God’s care.
  - (2) The eyes represent omniscience and awareness of all things.
  - (3) The 6 wings, from Isaiah 6.
- d. The worship in heaven.

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- (1) The image is drawn from Isaiah 6.
- (2) The triple use of “holy” speaks of the absoluteness and fullness and completeness. In every sense of the word, God is holy.
- (3) “Holy” at its heart it describes the essence of God. God is God. He is utterly other from His creation. Therefore, when things are attached to Him, they become holy.
- (4) I commend to you Matt Miller’s sermon on that passage.
- (5) And here we have the highest order of created beings crying constantly that He is holy.
- (6) **Note that worship in heaven is not a command, it is natural and utterly compelling.**

D. Chapter 5:

E. The book/scroll (1).

1. **Who has it?**
  - a. The Father.
  - b. Who has just been described in chapter 4.
2. Background on scrolls.

Were made from papyrus. Strips were laid down vertically and horizontally like a laminate. Glued together to form a sheet. Each sheet would be sewed to other sheets until the entire scroll was completed, about 34 feet long.

The result was that there was only one usable side to write. The outside was the vertical strips, which would make your quill jump. Very seldom was both sides written on. One of two reasons to do so: You were too poor to buy another scroll. You don’t want multiple scrolls. You want it all together.



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It is this second point that is in view. It is a way of saying “this is the fulness of what is being disclosed.” This is a full disclosure of God’s purposes for both judgment and blessing for all of creation.

Then the scroll would be sealed with wax seals. The number signifies completeness. What is **key** here is that in that day, until the seals were broken, whatever was stipulated in the scroll did not have the ability to be carried out.

- F.    The mighty angel.
  - 1.    Seeks one who is worthy to break the seals.
  - 2.    None in all of universe.
  - 3.    It is here that chapter 4 comes into play.
    - a.    The God who is so far removed from us due to our fallenness.
    - b.    The God who even the greatest and highest orders of angels are compelled to fall and worship.
    - c.    The God who simply so glorious that He can only be described in the most unique of language.
    - d.    Who can approach Him? Who can take that scroll? Who can open the seals so as to bring about God’s purposes?
  
- G.    **Why is he weeping?**
  - 1.    If no one is worthy, then God’s purposes for redemption, renewal, and justice will not come to pass.
  - 2.    The gospel will have meant nothing. All the wrongs will never be made right. No hope. All our suffering is just futility.
  - 3.    Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15—we really do need to just eat, drink and be merry.
  - 4.    It speaks again to the reality of what the gospel is truly saying.
    - a.    The gospel is that God was faithful to his promises. Through Jesus Christ He has defeated our great enemies.

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- b. And the kingdom of God has dawned, but we still look to the day when it will be fully revealed.
  - c. **But if there is no one to open the scroll, then this shall never take place. And he is shattered.**
- H. The correction.
- 1. The imagery here is simple and straight-forward.
  - 2. The lion of Judah is the king, the Davidic son. This is another Old Testament reference of the Messiah, the Christ, in Isaiah 11.
  - 3. **He looks to see the lion and sees what?**
    - a. A lamb—not two animals—the lion is the lamb.
    - b. This picks up the imagery of the sacrifice that was Jesus.
    - c. But notice also the horns and eyes.
      - (1) Seven again means perfection or completion.
      - (2) **Horn means what? Kingship. Eye means what? Knowledge.**
      - (3) **Put these together now, what is the image of the horns and eyes?** This lion, who is a slain lamb possesses the fulness of authority and knowledge.
    - d. Vs 6 is best translated like the NIV does it, “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne.”
      - (1) This is why chapter 4 was so important. Even the greatest of the angels could not approach the throne of God.
      - (2) But here the lion/lamb is in the midst, the center of that throne.
      - (3) He is God!

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- (4) From this point on, almost every time God is mentioned, or the throne, the Lamb is mentioned as well.
  - (a) 6:16; 7:9-10, 17
  - (b) And what follows through the rest of Revelation is a description of the triumph of the Lamb.
- I. The worship and praise.
  - 1. **The Lamb is introduced and the immediate reaction of all in heaven is what?**
    - a. Worship and again we have to go back to chapter 4 and see how powerful this image truly is.
    - b. Only God, in his throne room, is worshiped.
  - 2. Harp is a symbol of joy.
    - a. Psalm 137:1-4 By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and wept, When we remembered Zion. 2 Upon the willows in the midst of it We hung our harps. 3 For there our captors demanded of us songs, And our tormentors mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." 4 How can we sing the LORD's song In a foreign land?
    - b. The picture is clear, there is great joy and singing in the presence of the Lamb. **Why?**
      - (1) Because God's purposes shall be accomplished.
      - (2) Justice and love shall conquer sin and death.
      - (3) The adversary is to be destroyed.
  - 3. Bowls of incense which are prayers.
    - a. This is another Old Testament symbol.
    - b. Incense carries the idea of pleasantness. David, in the psalm, is saying that he desires his prayers to be pleasant to the Lord.

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- c. Here we find a value in us praying. Our prayers are not wasted as we pour out our burdens upon our Lord. There is one who is worthy to open the seals. They shall be answered.

## IV. Conclusion—The Glory of The Cross.

### A. The song of redemption.

#### 1. What is the basis of His right to open the scroll?

- a. It is His Cross work.
- b. In other words, it is not His deity, it is his death and resurrection. Without it, God's purposes would not have been accomplished.
- c. Now you see my point for this sermon. The centrality of the gospel is not merely for us, but for the grand, glorious, eternal purposes of God!

#### 2. Note three things about this atoning work of Jesus.

- a. It is a ***broad atonement*** in that there is not a tribe, nation, or people left out. No racism. All are image bearers.
  - (1) Oh that the church would reflect this now!
  - (2) The church too often lags behind on social justice.
  - (3) More on this next week.
- b. It is a ***directed atonement***.
  - (1) Not just saved **from** sin.
  - (2) They were purchased **for** God.
  - (3) "You were bought with a priced, therefore, glorify God with your body."
- c. It is a ***triumphal atonement*** (10).
  - (1) We shall reign on earth. This speaks of God's uncontested kingdom.

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- (2) Right now the church is this, but it is not realized.
- (3) Yet in our prayers we are interceding on the behalf of others. We function in the priestly work of mediation with the world.
  - (a) Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
  - (b) Romans 15:15-16.
  - (c) And in eternity we will be the priests who praise God.
3. Vs. 12. Seven things the Lamb was to receive. In other words, the fulness of all praise and glory and honor.
4. And finally, every created thing shouts out in praise to the Creator.
  - a. Remember that the whole of creation groans for that day of redemption.
  - b. The created realm glories at its very core that the redeemer lives!
  - c. For in time it shall be freed!

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## Small Group Questions

- **One key point that was made in the sermon was how chapter 4 shows the complete contentment of God. Why then would He save us since it is abundantly obvious that He does not need us?**
- **What are some ways that we trivialize the transcendence of God in our private lives? How about in the church gatherings? Finally, in our dealings with those who do not trust in Jesus Christ?**
- **What are some things you are looking forward to seeing done on that final day when the judgments of God are finally brought out?**