

Revelation 4:1–8

The View From Heaven

The Summit Church, Revelation

MPT: In the midst of earthly chaos, John is given a vision of the heavenly throne—occupied, glorious, and central—revealing that God is sovereign over all creation and worthy of all worship.

MPS: When you see that the throne is occupied, you find stability, meaning, and perspective that the world can never give.

Prison Highlight

REACH all people

Started with members: Jamie Warren

2010: Women → 2016: Men

Tony Diana → Scott Jablonski

Now inside *and* outside prison walls

Bumper Video: Revelation 4:1–8

¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,

who was and is and is to come!"

INTRODUCTION

Been marching through Revelation...today Revelation 4 .

- A few weeks ago Pastor Mitchell Lee gave us a great overview of **Rev 4-7**, but over the next few weeks we're gonna zoom in on each of these individually.

Before we look at it, I wanna take you back a bit to 2007: 6 months leading up to my salvation...PRIME + FBCW.

- I enjoyed the hangouts, games and food (and the hot girl who invited me)...but eventually someone would **begin vamping** on keys (which is when the HS knows he's welcome to join), someone would **get real serious and pray**, and then **worship would begin**.
- People would start worshipping with **hands in the air, eyes closed**, sometimes **crying**, and they **sang like they meant it**.
- I'd hear people talk about being "**in awe of God**" or "**seeing his glory**" or "**feeling his presence**"...but none of it clicked for me. I'd do my best to **emulate** and **feel** what they were experiencing, but I never could. I **didn't hate** it—in fact, I wanted it—but I just didn't get it.
- I'd come into these worship services and look around almost **confused**, and sometimes even **frustrated**. I remember thinking: *Did I miss something?...Am I supposed to feel something here?*

That 2007 pre-Christian version of me didn't get it.

- Looking back, I realize the worship wasn't the problem...I just didn't actually know the One we were worshipping.
 - The problem wasn't that I was **bored**...it's that I was **blind**.

- Fast forward 6 months to 2008, the Lord opened my spiritual eyes, I fully surrendered my life to Jesus, and **I was then able to go to that place where they went to in worship.**
 - The **music** didn't change...my **vision** did.

That place I've learned to go to is the place we see in **Revelation 4**. In Revelation 4, John is taken up, not just into a **different world, but into a deeper reality**. Look at v1: **¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!**

John's vision changes **from earth to heaven** and is gonna remain there until chapter 10. Remember, Jesus had just spoken to the 7 churches—some worn down by **persecution**, others drifting into **compromise**, some outright **disobeying**. Despite their different struggles, what they all needed was **ENDURANCE**.

- *And how does God motivate them to endure? To stand fast in suffering? To turn away from sin? To give their lives for the cause of Christ?*
- He doesn't hand them a list of commands...he gives them a vision of himself on a throne.
- God **throws open the curtain to heaven** and says, *"Before you look at anything else, look here first. This is what's ultimate. This is what holds everything together."*

And when we look through that open door with John, we find that heaven offers us three things *that we need* just as much as the early church did: **stability, meaning, and perspective.**

Whenever we look around and wonder:

- *Is anyone really in control?*
- *Is there a point to all this?*
- *How do I even make sense of what's going on?*

Revelation answers by pulling back the curtain and inviting us to see **everything in our lives** through the lens of a Holy God seated on the throne in heaven.

- Not an **empty** throne. Not an **unstable** throne. Not a **temporary** throne.
- But an **occupied, holy, and eternal** one. A throne in heaven that gives us **stability, meaning, and perspective** on earth.

WALKTHROUGH

¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven (he's being given a glimpse of heaven *right now*)! **And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet** (Jesus), **said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."**

Now some believe that invitation—"Come up here"—hints at the RAPTURE of the church, where Jesus **calls his church up to meet him in the air before the 7 years of tribulation** starts down on earth (INSERT Kirk Cameron joke and clothes piling on the floor as friends and family disappear).

- Others don't see the rapture of the church, but see the **tribulation as a metaphor for Satanic opposition in the current age**. They think when John says "after this" it's simply a continuation of the visions (*revelation*) John has been receiving.
- Our church doesn't take a definitive position on that (and I'm gonna leave that whole can for PJD to open up and deal with himself in a few weeks) because, as we've said, the point of Revelation isn't to give us a **timeline of events** or to **pinpoint which political figures are represented by beasts...the point**

is to pull back the curtain of history so that we can see the authority of Jesus over and above everything.

See, there are two movements happening in Revelation, and our tendency is to only read it through the lens of one of those movements.

1. The first movement is **backward and forward**.
 - That's how we usually read it—looking at **past history** and **future eternity**, through the lens of **timelines** and **end times**: what theologians call reading it *eschatologically*. Backward and forward.
2. But we also need to read it **up and down**.
 - We need to see not just what's happening **across time**, but what's happening **between heaven and earth**: up and down.
 - Not just *eschatologically* (“How does this affect my future?”), but also *doxologically* (“How does this change my worship?”).

These verses are calling us to lift our eyes **up and beyond** earth and get a glimpse into heaven.

²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

In the Spirit means **entering the spiritual perspective**—seeing things that **physical eyes cannot see**.

What's happening in Revelation 4 is like **two worlds colliding**. That open door in heaven gives John a glimpse of the **spiritual reality** that exists alongside our **physical one**—what we call “convergent spaces.”

- The Bible is full of these “**convergent spaces**” where heaven meets earth: we see it in Eden, the Tabernacle, the Temple, Elijah and the Lord's Army, and the Mount of Transfiguration.
- The only way I can think to describe it is kinda like if you've ever seen **The Matrix** or **Stranger Things**—you have **two realities happening simultaneously; two realities running at the same time**.
- This moment in Revelation is one of those spaces. And what connects us to it is the Holy Spirit. When we're filled with the Spirit, we're connected to the very real presence of God vertically—even if we can't always see it.

And I know that sounds wild—like something out of a movie—but **this ain't fiction**. Because when we gather together, we're stepping into one of those convergent spaces. *In fact, this is the type of expectation you should have every time you walk into this place.*

- When we show up to worship, we're not just **singing songs** or **hearing a spiritual pep talk**...we're stepping into something eternal. We're coming into a **convergent space** where **heaven touches earth**. We should come in ready to meet the eternal God in a very real moment...because HE'S HERE.
- Let me ask you: *When you come to church, are you just going through the motions, or are you coming in **expecting to encounter glory**? Are you just showing up out of habit...or are you showing up **to meet with the living God**?*
- Because HE'S HERE. The throne is occupied. And that King is worthy of more than your **complacency, casual attendance**, and **checked-out singing**.

Yes, he is the one seated on the throne (v2).

- At this time in history, the **Emperor Domitian**, who was **violently persecuting Christians**, sat on the throne in Rome.

- But John is getting a glimpse of a **greater throne**: **Domitian** may rule Rome from his throne, but God rules the *universe* from his.

And God's throne is GLORIOUS; look at v3: ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian (or sardis), and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

Now keep in mind John is trying to **describe heaven using earthly words**. That's like trying to **stream 4K resolution over a dial-up connection**...or like when your **kid draws a picture of the family and your arms and legs stick straight out from your head**—the **heart is there**, but the **medium is limited**.

So John says **he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian**—stones that reflect God's **beauty** and **worth**.

- In the OT, these stones were on the High Priest's breastplate, **representing all of God's people** (12 stones for the 12 tribes).
- **Jasper** was the **LAST** stone on the breastplate and **carnelian** the **FIRST**—a picture of beginning and end, alpha and omega.
- Carnelian was actually a **BLOOD RED** stone, pointing to both the **wrath of God poured out on sin** and **the blood of Christ that purchased our redemption from the penalty of that sin**.

^{3b}and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

The rainbow, of course, is the sign of **God's faithfulness**.

- In Genesis 9, God gave the rainbow after the flood as a promise that **he'd never again destroy the earth that way**.
- Even as judgment is coming in Revelation, the rainbow reminds us **God is merciful, even when he judges**.

- And don't miss this: Usually we see a rainbow *after* a storm, right? This one shows up *before* the storm of judgment, cuz God's mercy always goes before his judgment.
- **Psalm 103:8**, "*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*"

Also, notice the emerald rainbow was **"around the throne,"** not just above it. That means it formed a **full circle**, not just an arc.

- I saw this picture the other day of a **Chinese Pileus Cloud**.
- A Pileus Cloud is when a thunderstorm cloud shoots up so quickly that it pushes air above it (like a rocket), and that **air forms a cap on top of the cloud—like a cloud wearing a hat**.
- And sometimes, if the sun hits just right, that little **cloud hat** shines with rainbow colors...like the **cloud is wearing a crown**.

John sees God's throne surrounded by an **emerald-colored, glowing, FULL CIRCLE of light**, **not just a partial arc of a rainbow**, because in **heaven nothing is partial or incomplete**. In heaven, **everything is whole, finished, and full of purpose**.

⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones,

Rainbow around the throne vertically...and 24 thrones around God's throne horizontally. Most folks believe these **24 thrones represent two groups of 12**: **12 tribes of Israel** and the **12 apostles**, symbolizing the **full family of God—everyone that Jesus died to save**.

and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

No one can see with 100% certainty who's on the 24 thrones...lots of interpretations. But we do know **they're overcomers** (a phrase

regularly used throughout Revelation): these are people who **trusted God through trials** and now **worship him** face to face.

- The point of Rev 4 isn't *who they are*, it's what the 24 elders do: they **fall off *their* thrones** and **lay their crowns** before God's throne, giving him glory, honor, and praise.

⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder...

This echoes **Mount Sinai in Exodus 19**, reminding us that God is not only **merciful**, but also **powerful and just**.

- We love to focus on the **rainbow (mercy)**, but we can't ignore the **thunder (judgment)**. It's at the cross where both of those meet: God's love for sinners (rainbow) and his justice for sin (thunder and lightning).
- Yes, God is a God of grace and mercy, but **his grace reigns through righteousness and judgment**, Romans 5:21 tells us.

...and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,

This is the Holy Spirit, shining brightly before the throne and illuminating God's truth for his people.

- Which means we also have the Holy Trinity present in this heavenly scene: Jesus the Son invites us in, God the Father is seated on the throne, and the Holy Spirit is blazing before it.

⁶and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

In Scripture the sea often represents **restless chaos**, but here it's **clear and still**...**CUZ under God's feet, even the chaos is calm.**

- It's a visual reminder that **GOD IS FULLY IN CONTROL**.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within,

These four creatures—**lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle**—they represent **all of creation**. They're covered in eyes, front and back, **watching and always worshiping**, responding to God's holiness **from every angle, across all time...**and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

Adrian Rogers called these four creatures "**God's cheerleaders**": they're so overwhelmed by what they see they can't help but worship.

- These creatures who represent all of creation serve as a reminder of where all of history is headed: **One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**...because no one can stand indifferent when they see God as he truly is.

And what they see is a God so holy that they never stop saying: "**Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.**" BTW, this is the only attribute in Scripture repeated three times in a row.

- The Bible never says God is *love, love, love ... mercy, mercy, mercy ... justice, justice, justice*.
- But it does say **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**.

- God's holiness means he is **completely pure**, totally **set apart**, and **perfect in every way**.
- This is God's primary attribute. His holiness isn't just something he has, *it's who he is*.
- It's his holiness that shows us how serious sin is, how amazing grace is, and how worthy he is of our worship.

This vision in Revelation 4 is meant to simultaneously **overwhelm our senses** and **anchor our hearts**.

- The **jewels** and **rainbow** around the throne echo moments when God revealed himself in glory—reminding us that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That gives us stability.
- The **24 elders** likely represent the complete people of God—those he's redeemed from every time and place, reminding us that we're part of something bigger than ourselves. That gives you meaning.
- The **seven spirits** symbolize the fullness of the Holy Spirit—completely present, completely active, reminding us that God is not distant.
- The **thunder and lightning** show that God's throne isn't weak or quiet—it pulses with holy power.
- And the **sea**, which often symbolizes chaos, is perfectly still before him. Even what feels most out of control is under his feet. That's perspective.

See, **because God is on the throne**, we're given a foundation for life on earth...and that means at least 3 things for us today:

Because God is on the throne...

1) ...you can have stability in a chaotic world.

Road trips + bad storms.

- **DAD:** Eagles, sunflower seeds, Marlboro Red
- **ME:** I'd go to sleep. Why? *Cuz Dad is in the driver's seat...*

That's what Revelation 4 is showing us: when everything around you feels shaky, the throne of God is unshakable.

- *You see it in v2?* **God is SEATED on the throne.** He isn't **pacing**. He's not **anxious**. He's not **caught off guard**. He's not reacting to earth's chaos. Heaven is **calm**. Heaven is **controlled**. Heaven is **confident** because the throne is never vacant.
- And that's not some **future promise**...it's a **present reality**.

When life gets chaotic, most of us scramble for control—we obsess over news, micromanage our kids, spiral with anxiety, or numb out with distractions.

- **But the stability your soul craves isn't found in your ability to fix everything...it's found in the One who sits on the throne.**
- **Psalm 93:1-2 (CSB),** **"The LORD reigns! He is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed, enveloped in strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be shaken. Your throne has been established from the beginning; you are from eternity."**
- **Hebrews 12:28,** **"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken..."**
- So when life feels chaotic, you don't need to white-knuckle your way through. You just need to remember: the throne is not empty and **your Father is still at the wheel**.

You can declare:

- *I can release my grip on anxiety because the world isn't spinning out of his hands.*
- *I will anchor my peace in the unshakable presence of the One seated in heaven.*

- *I will respond to chaos with calm—not because life is easy, but because God is enthroned.*
- *I will trade panic for peace, because my Father is still at the wheel.*

Heaven is not in chaos. Your life is not in chaos. The current global/political situation is not in chaos. Even when you can't see it, God is not *reacting*...he's *reigning*.

Because God is on the throne, you can have stability in a chaotic world. Also, cuz God is on the throne...

2) ...you can find meaning beyond yourself.

In heaven, everything orbits the throne—not the self.

- John Calvin talked about this early in *The Institutes* when he said: "As long as our gaze is fixed on this world, on the horizontal plane of this earth, we have no problem with our self-images. We flatter ourselves with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue...and address ourselves as something only less than demigods. But should we once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and reflect what kind of Being he is, and lift our gaze to heaven...in that second, that former security and smugness is annihilated."
- This is so counter-cultural: I know you've been told you're the center: you're **special**, a **rainbow**, a **snowflake**, you're a **skittle**, you're **one of a kind**. But here's the reality: There's only One who sits on the throne, and it ain't you. There's only One whom the world revolves around, and it ain't you.
- **You're part of the story, but you're not the point of it.**

Imagine a woman showing up to someone else's wedding dressed in all white. Got a veil. Sparkly shoes. A sash that says, "She said yes!"

- During the ceremony she walks up front to **livestream it on her instagram account**. She's snapping **selfies**.
- During the vows, she grabs a mic and **declares her love** to the couple getting married.
- During the first dance she's out there with her **best moves**.

When we live like we're the center of the universe, it's like hijacking someone else's wedding. You were *invited* to the wedding—you're part of the wedding—but you're not the point of the wedding.

So when you spend your life trying to **build your own platform, make your own name, or curate your perfect little world**, you're sitting in a seat that doesn't belong to you. **That seats reserved**...and your name ain't the one on the reservation.

If you've ever wondered why life can be so exhausting, *this is why*: you weren't built to carry the weight of that throne.

- You're trying to **achieve meaning** by making yourself the center instead of **receiving meaning** and centering your life around the One who's at the center.
- **Colossians 1:16-17**, "All things were created through *HIM* and for *HIM*...in *HIM* all things hold together."

True meaning isn't found in being the center of the story. It's not found in:

- Obsessing over how many likes, views, or reactions you get.
- Making decisions based on what makes you look best.
- Treating people like extras in your own personal highlight reel.
- Escaping suffering and maximizing physical pleasures while stacking up riches, achievements, and success.

- Measuring your value by how much attention or comfort you can accumulate.
 - That's living like meaning is found in making yourself the main character.

For the people of God, we find meaning *beyond* ourselves. The meaning of life is to **know God**, to **enjoy God**, and to **reflect the beauty of God** as we know him through a relationship with Christ.

Revelation 4 **re-centers** us. It reminds us that because God is on the throne, you don't have to be. AND THAT'S REALLY GOOD NEWS!

- It means you can **stop trying to prove yourself in every room you walk into**—you're already known and loved by the One who matters most.
- It means you **don't have to curate a perfect life online to feel valuable**—your worth isn't built by likes, it's anchored in the throne room.
- It means you **don't have to have all the answers for you or your kids future**—because the One on the throne already sees the whole story.
- It means **when the job falls through, the plans unravel, or the relationship ends**...your identity doesn't.
- It means **you can rest, because the weight of the world isn't on your shoulders**—it's on his.

When God is at the center, you don't have to manufacture significance, **because you already have it!** **Think about it like this: TWO WATCHES.** Do the exact same thing.

- One is a \$60 Casio I bought on Amazon.
- One is a \$6k Rolex—heirloom
 - Why is one worth so much more than the other?

- What makes it valuable isn't **what it does**, but WHO IT BELONGS TO.
- The value doesn't come from the **function**, but FROM THE NAME IT BEARS.

Friend, don't forget the name *on you* is HIS name. You don't have to **earn your value** or **chase meaning in what you do**. Your identity is anchored in the One who came and died to save you, and the name he put on you changes everything:

- His name is **RIGHTEOUS**—so you don't have to wear shame anymore and wonder if you're good enough.
- His name is **FAITHFUL**—so even when you mess up, he doesn't give up.
- His name is **VICTORIOUS**—so you fight *from* victory, not for it.
- His name is **BELOVED**—so you don't have to chase love or approval from this world to find meaning.
 - Stop living like a Casio when God's declared you a Rolex

You can stop chasing meaning by **trying to make a name** for yourself, because the One on the throne has already **written his name on you**. Because God's on the throne, you can find meaning beyond yourself.

Lastly, because God is on the throne...

3) **...your eternal perspective fuels your worship.**

IOW, when you **see God rightly**, you **respond rightly**. That's what happened to me in 2008. That's what's happening in Revelation 4.

The living creatures aren't worshiping because they're *told* to—nobody handed them a church bulletin and said, *"Now it's time to*

stand and sing.” They’re not **following a setlist** and waiting for their **favorite worship leader** to **hit the bridge** again on their **favorite song**.

- Their praise isn’t driven by *obligation*, but by *sight*.
- They’re worshipping because they see:
 - They see him high and lifted up.
 - They see his holiness, beauty, and glory.
- And when you see him clearly, worship no longer has to be **manufactured**...it’s simply **awakened**.

10 years old = GLASSES // See, here’s the problem for a lot of us: we treat Sunday like it’s the one day a week we put on our spiritual glasses to go and see Jesus.

- You get dressed up, put on those spiritual glasses, show up, sing some songs, listen to a sermon—“see Jesus” for a bit—but then you leave here, go home, take your glasses off, toss ‘em on the nightstand, and go about your week **blurry** and **distracted**.

18 years old = LASIK // But full surrender to Jesus is supposed to be more like **LASIK**: it’s not something you put on and off...it’s a PERMANENT change in how you see everything.

- LASIK doesn’t make the world **brighter** or **louder** or more **glorious**...it simply reveals what was already there.
- When my wife got saved she said, *“It’s like the grass was green for the first time; sky was blue for the first time.”* It’s not that it wasn’t before, but now she had the spiritual eyes to see.

Revelation 4 shows us that boredom in worship isn’t a **music problem**...it’s a **vision problem**! You don’t need a **hype song**...you need a **clearer view of the throne**!...a throne that **reorients your life**, **lifts your eyes**, and **awakens your heart** to worship this Holy God.

The clearer you see God, the more compelled you are to worship him.

CONCLUSION

Summit family, when you see what John saw—when the Spirit opens your eyes to the throne—it changes everything. It gives you **stability, meaning, and purpose** this world can never offer.

- You realize his kingdom is unshakeable and the King isn’t going anywhere.

The only question left is: *Have you seen him?*

- Seeing God begins by walking through that door: **After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!**
- Friend, that door is still open...that invitation still stands...Jesus is still welcoming people just like you and me.
- It’s an invitation, not just to see a throne, but to step into the reality behind everything.
 - To stop living like this world is all there is.
 - To stop believing the lie that you have to carry it all, fix it all, control it all.
 - To stop scrambling for your own throne, and finally rest under the one that’s already occupied.

Hear me: you don’t get that door by your **performance**; you don’t earn it by **singing louder**. You get there because Jesus made a way.

So, again, the question isn’t whether God is on the throne...the question is have you stepped through the open door?

- Because once you do—once you see him rightly—you can’t ever live or be the same.

PRAY

OPEN OUR EYES TODAY. “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty...”