**Book of Revelation Sermon IV**

**Trust in God. Trust Also In Me**

Theme of Revelation: Peel back the layers of history and even the terrible persecutions and what do we find? **The lamb is on the throne and God is in control.**

Last week:

Rev. 3:1-6 Sardis. The city of Sardis was living on past glory.

Rev 3:1 So did the church in Sardis!

They were living on reputation. They looked good, but they were dead, spiritually.

They were remembering the glory days, but not doing very much.

Remember the campus ministry.

Remember how we baptized so many.

Remember the sacrificial special contributions and the desire to go plant a church.

Jesus: Wake UP!!! Their problem was not sin, per se, but lack of action and growth.

Solution: Rev 3:3 Wake up, Remember, obey and repent.

Rev 3:7-13 Philadelphia

Context: They had been heavily persecuted by Jews in the city.

v. 8 You have little strength but you have kept my word. A great compliment!

About the Jews who had been persecuting them:

I will make them come and worship at your feet.

Rev 3:14-22 Laodicea

Laodicea: Their sin? Spiritual lukewarmness.

Wouldn’t it be better to be lukewarm (a half-hearted Christian) than ice cold (an enemy of Christianity or a blatant pagan)? NO!!!!

They made Jesus sick to his “stomach.”

You say you are rich. I don’t need a thing. I have a job, a home, a family…

Reality check: You are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

3:18 Fortunately, it is not too late from them. They can “buy from me gold, refined by fire.” They can begin to put their treasures in heaven again. They can return to relying on Jesus, not on the world for salvation.

**Revelation Ch 4** Now, the revelation/visions begin. Let’s let our imagination engage what we are about to read. Let us look at the big picture and not get caught up in the meaning of small details. Remember the message: The Father is on the throne and Jesus at the center of the heavenly tabernacle.

Stay faithful to the end and, no matter the trial, no matter the persecution, you will wear a crown and you will enter into the New Jerusalem.

Rev 4:1-8a

4:1 Now, John looks into heaven and the movie begins. “a door standing open in heaven.” A literal door?

4:1b “what must take place after this” ie what will happen soon (not in 2050 AD)

How does the movie open? With God on the throne, naturally.

Ch 4 Believe in God

Ch 5 Believe also in me (Jn 14:1)

Ch 4-5 (especially Ch 4) set up the rest of the book. It is the scene we are to remember as we look in horror at the judgments to be poured out.

Message: When we are persecuted, when we lose a job, undergo hardships, when we are admonished and rebuked as the churches were, when we undergo difficulties such as Covid-19, we need to look to God on the throne!!!!

4:2 A throne in heaven. Throne 38 times in the book. 17 times in Ch. 4-5 Do you get the idea?

Someone sitting on it. Who do you think?

Jasper (white) holiness of God

Carnelian (red) justice, righteousness

Rainbow. God’s promise/covenant (Genesis 9:12-17) “like an emerald” Green the dominant color in this rainbow (life, living hope?)

Rev 4:4 24 elders on 24 thrones = 12 apostles + 12 patriarchs of Israel? (= the priesthood of all God’s people?)

12 x 2 2 = power.

Jesus said this would happen to the twelve (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30)

Dressed in white with golden crowns. (purity, ruling with God)

These 24 elders represent, in a sense, us!

We are dressed in white and wearing golden crowns. (but watch what we do with our crowns)

This is a picture of the heavenly tabernacle, with close resemblance to the Jewish tabernacle. The 24 elders represent the 24 courses of the priests who served in the temple/tabernacle. (1 Chron 24:3-19)

The picture is of power and authority and suggests security for those loved by God.

4:5 Now the judging power of God is presented as well. “lightning, and rumblings of thunder” The Jews would be made to think of Exodus 19:16. Notice that they trembled.

4:5b seven lamps/seven spirits The Holy Spirit shedding light and revelation.

4:6 Around the throne a sea of crystal. Representing the perfection of God because of which we cannot approach the throne. It represents separation from God. Note that this sea has been removed in heaven Revelation 21:1 “there was no longer any [crystal] sea. (note: even John was separated from the church he oversaw by the sea while on Patmos)

Four living creatures = four cherubim in the Holy of Holies over which God rested.

These are the four who defend God’s holiness.

Lion, ox, man, eagle.

Might they be the four seraphim of Isaiah 6:2? Similar to the four creatures in Ezek 1:5-14 which includes the man, lion, ox, and eagle. Four Cherubim. (four instead of six wings) Also Ezekiel 10

These are the four who kept Adam and Eve from the garden. They were stitched into the curtain in the temple to keep people out of the Holy of Holy.

Their beastliness represents their fierceness in defending the honor of God. King of predators: lion, powerful bull and cunning human and eagle.

4:8a Four living creatures around the throne, covered with eyes on every side. Ever watchful to protect God’s holiness.

Q: Would you like to approach God on his throne now?

Q: What impression are you given of God in Rev 4:1-8?

Rev 4:8b-11 Worship #1 (of seven in Revelation)

Holy, Holy, Holy!!! (Like Isaiah 6:3)

Let’s say it together: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!!!!

Let’s never forget this.

What are we saying? You are worthy, O God, to receive glory and honor and power!

Let’s say it together!

v. 10 What are we doing? Falling down and casting down our crowns.

Q: Do you cast your crown down before our God?

**Revelation Chapter 5**

Ch 4 we saw the Father and the Spirit. What is missing?

Revelation 5:1-7 Enter: Jesus Christ, the lion and the lamb!

A scroll (the book of Revelation?) (written on both sides… a complete message Ezek 2:9) with seven (perfect) seals. These perfect seals require someone perfect to open them.

5:2-3 No one was worthy (Rom 3:10 No one is righteous, not even one, Mark 10:18 no one is good but God alone)

Joke: If someone asks you how you are doing, say, “I am well” Not I am good.

No one can open up the scroll.

5:5-6 God to us: Do not weep!!! Enter Jesus

Jesus is a lion (a powerful ruler) Gen 49:8-11 the lion of Judah-of God’s people

Jesus is the Root of David (Messiah) Isaiah 11:1-5

Jesus is triumphant

Jesus is a Lamb

Q: In what sense is Jesus a lion? A lion to his enemies

Q: In what sense is Jesus a lamb? A lamb to those who follow him

Q: what would a lamb “as it were slain” look like?

Note: The view of Jesus is quite different from Rev 1:12-17 because his sacrifice is in view.

A lamb with seven horns (power) and seven eyes (omniscient). Bizarre. Not literal.

v. 6 7 horns = perfect in his power

7 eyes = perfect in his knowledge (by the Holy Spirit)

Where is Jesus? Right in the center of the throne (v. 6). That is where our high priest is!

Jesus confidently takes the scroll, which is the message of Revelation to the saints.

Rev 5:8-14 Then the most amazing worship service in history breaks out!!!

Jesus is God! He is a lamb, a lion, the triumphant one. Jesus is worshipped

Rev 5:8 The four creatures (cherubim) and the 24 elders (the saved) begin to worship. Harp = singing bowl of incense = prayer

(Note: Angels never have harps in the Bible, but the elder (representing us) do.

We are praying and singing glory to the Lamb!!!

Rev 5:9-14 A New Song. A reference to the song of Moses Exodus 15

What are we singing? You are worthy. Jesus, you are worthy.

Let’s say it together: Jesus, you are worthy!!!!!

Why is Jesus worthy?

v. 9 Because he gave his life to purchase (redeem) every tribe, language, people and nation

v. 10 to make them a kingdom of priests. Finally, Exodus 19:6 is being fulfilled. Finally there is a kingdom of people with an intimate relationship with God.

I am a priest, and the ones I minister to are the lost. Romans 15:15-16.

We disciples do not need a priest. Jesus is our high priest. But he made us priests.

Q: How are you doing in your priestly duty?

v. 11 Not only us, but hundreds of millions of angels.

Worthy is the lamb who was slain!!!!

v. 13 In fact, all creation is worshipping God, as it should be.

Along with cherubim. What a glorious picture!!!!

Remember: This is intended to set the stage for the rest of Revelation.

Summary so far:

Trust in God who sits on the throne

Trust also in me who is a worthy lamb who was slain so that you can worship God.

**Revelation 6: Opening of the seals.** Seal = something not yet revealed.

Structure of Rev 6-16:

Seven seals Ch 6-7

Seven trumpets Ch 8-9

Seven symbolic creatures Ch 10-15

Seven bowls Ch 16-17

All God’s enemies destroyed. Ch 18-20

All have to do with the judgment of God

Rev 6:1-8

Rev 6:1 Come! Come see the vision. Imagine the scene!!! The sound of hoof-beats and enter a White Horse! The main action begins.

Horses are used by God in Zechariah Zech 1:8-11 Zech 6:1-8

6:2 First seal opened. What is revealed first?

The picture of a warrior on a white horse with a golden crown and a bow = Parthian warrior/king. They are the only ones in memory who defeated Rome (Carrhae 53 BC)

6:3-4 Next: A red horse. This horse represents war which will come to the earth. …given the power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. A large sword. It probably symbolizes persecution which accompanies those who preach the gospel.

Will this impact God’s people? Yes!

6:5-6 The third seal. A black horse. Famine. Scale for measuring food. Whole day’s wage just to buy sufficient wheat to stay alive. Note, oil and wine are still flowing, so the wealthy are not hurt by this famine. It probably represents the financial hardship that came on the Church because of persecution.

6:7-8 The fourth seal. A pale (yellow-green) horse. Death (with Hades right behind) The power to kill ¼ of humanity by the four (partial) judgments: war, famine, disease and wild beasts. (parallel Ezek 14:12-20).

Message: Judgment is coming on Rome. It may represent martyrdoms which are coming on the Church as well.

Q: How do you feel about the prospect of persecution which might include financial hardship and even death?

Rev 6:9-17

6:9-11 The fifth seal. Reveals the souls of those killed because of the word of God and their testimony (original witnesses of Jesus?). Martyrs.

Martyrs are “under the altar” (v. 9) This represents the blood of a life which is shed on an altar which pours down “under the altar.” The martyrs are a sacrifice for God.

How long…. Before God judges the wicked. Retribution, not vindictiveness, is a good thing. Right now, I cannot relate to this sentiment, but I believe we will when we reach heaven. We will agree with these martyrs that God’s judgment on those who oppose Jesus is a good thing. This sentiment—asking God to come in judgment on God’s enemies—is a common theme in Psalms (Psalm 94:1-3) and is in common in Revelation (Rev 11:7-18 Rev 16:5-6)

v. 11 Answer: not yet. Wait a little longer until the ones to be killed in the persecution prophesied by Revelation is complete. God will judge Rome but Rome has some more persecuting to do first.

God: When will you bring the Covid-19 pandemic to an end?

God: Trust in my timing.

God: When will you judge my tormentor at work?

6:12-17 The sixth seal. Earthquake, sun turns black, moon turns red, stars fall from the sky, the sky recedes like a scroll and the mountains removed. Everyone hides in caves and among the rocks. This is classic apocalyptic. Judgment is coming. The Day of the Lord is here. (Isaiah 2:10-21 for example. Also Joel 2:10, 31 Isaiah 34:4 Nahum 1:5 for sun, stars, etc. ). This is not literal, of course, but it is real. From the OT examples, we know that this is about the fall of a nation, not the end of the world.

An ironic description: v. 16 the wrath of the lamb.

The wrath of Jesus is coming on the Roman persecutor.

“Fall on us, Hide us” Utter terror.

Rev 6:17 Rhetorical Question: Who can stand under this terrible tribulation? Answer: Revelation Chapter 7.

**Rev Chapter 7** An encouraging interlude (because we need one)

v. 2 An angel comes “from the East” (where the sun rises). Four angels hold back the coming winds (4 = whole earth) winds = God’s activity. (Note Daniel 7:1 the four winds act on the sea, and bring up the four beasts, which means it was the work of God which raised up Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome)

God’s people are sealed (protected Ezek 9:1-6) (seal = ownership) from the coming wrath (destructive winds). 144,000 or them (all of all of all of God’s people God’s people)

Are the 144,000 Jewish Christians and the “great multitude that no one could count” Gentile Christians? Almost certainly not. (Besides, in Rev 22:4 all believers are marked in this way)

Why 12,000 from Judah, 12,000 from Reuben, etc.? To emphasize that ALL Christians are sealed and under this protection.

Note: The list is not that given in Genesis. It includes Levi and Joseph but not Dan, Ephraim (centers of calf-worship).

Q: Does this sealing mean that the Christians will escape physical suffering in the coming tribulation? Answer: No! In Ezekiel 9:1-6, the righteous are sealed from judgment, but definitely not from the destruction about to come on Jerusalem (Ezek 21:3,4).

The “Great multitude” is all the redeemed, but more particularly, the early Christians who were to be protected when God judges Rome.

White robes purity

palm branches generally a symbol of joy (Jesus entering Jerusalem) more broadly a reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Jews built booths of palm branches to celebrate having a relationship with God. A celebration of salvation.

The point for the Christians: No matter what is coming up, no one and no thing will be able to steal your joy.

A third worship service, like Rev 5. (read v. 10-12)

(v. 13) An elder: Who are these people a (symbol of)? Are you getting this, John?

Apparently, a rhetorical question (v. 14)

These are those who survive the coming tribulation and overcome by the blood of the Lamb. What a great assurance.

v. 15 God spreads his tabernacle over them. They are in his tent. He will dwell with them.