

Revelation 4:6-11
 The Throne Room of God
 Part 2
 Study 18

Two female friends die together in a car accident. As they enter heaven, Peter instructs the ladies, "There's just one rule in heaven. Don't step on the ducks." (As you can imagine, there are a lot of ducks in heaven).

- As careful as she was, one of the women steps on a duck and Peter immediately appears - along with the ugliest man she ever saw. And Peter says, "Your punishment for stepping on a duck is to spend eternity with this man.
 - Well, after seeing what happened to her friend, the other woman is very careful to avoid stepping on ducks. One day Peter appears by the lady with the most handsome man she ever saw, and he chains the man to her. "Oh, my," she says. "I don't know what I could have done to deserve a man like you."
 - The man looks at the lady and replies, "I don't know about you, lady, but I stepped on a duck." (*Adapted from Robert Kopp, "Cutting Through Compromise"*)

Perspective!

- Perspective is paramount, isn't it?
 - And our perspective in and of life can be life altering in so many ways
 - How we choose to see things, how we choose think about things, what we choose for our "worldview"
 - These all mold our minds and mold our hearts throughout this life
 - Our perspective really has so much influence on our choices
 - and in how we view circumstances of life, doesn't it?
- And this is why the Bible is so important!
 - Because we have the opportunity to be in the Word of God and gain a heavenly perspective
 - A perspective of eternity
 - And what a difference that makes.
- Because no matter what you're going through today,

- No matter what you've gone through in the past or what awaits you in the future
 - If you're a Christian, this life on earth is the worst it will ever be
 - And heaven, for the Christian, our eternal resting place, is just around the corner!

And that is the perspective that God has called me and you to have in this life.

- We are called to have a biblical worldview – not a world-worldview
 - We are to have a heavenly-mindedness
 - As Col. 3:2 commands “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”
 - Jesus tells us “**19** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19-21)
- The Word of God is constantly calling you and me to have a biblical, heavenly mindedness
 - To see this world in light of the big picture of eternity

And this morning we are given this opportunity because in our passage this morning we are already in heaven

- And it is here, as our attention is drawn to the reality of heaven, that we see what awaits us!
 - The indescribable, incredible, awesome presence of God that awaits us!
 - We see what our loved ones who have gone on to heaven have been experiencing all this time
 - We understand what those that we have lost through tragedy
 - Or maybe our own choices - we see what they have been experiencing.
- We see heaven itself and the awesome throne room of God
 - And He who sits on His throne!
 - Let us soak in this morning all the glory that is revealed and gain a deeper understanding of what no....

- “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man. The things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9)

Last week, the Apostle John, and us as well to a degree

- Has been translated from his earthly prison of Patmos into the glorious presence of Almighty God
 - And John describes his 1st-person view of the throne room starting in verse 1
- He see a throne and God the Father sitting on that throne
 - And the Father is described in brilliant colors
 - And around the throne of God is a emerald colored rainbow
 -
 - Encompassing the throne of God like a halo
- And around the throne are 24 Elders
 - Which we learned last week that these 24 are representatives of a larger group of people
 - Like the 24 priests in 1 Chron. 24 and 25 who were representatives of the larger sum of priests
 - These 24 elders are representatives of the church of Jesus Christ – men and women
 - Like the elders of the church here on earth represent all within the church, so these 24 elders do the same.
 - And we know that this is these are church age believers by how they are described in both chapters 4 and 5
 - More on this when we get to chapter 5

John also continues to describe his experience in verse 5 “**5** And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.[c] Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the[d] seven Spirits of God.”

- These thunderings and lightnings and voices...these are the proclamations that come from the throne of God.
 - And burning before the throne are seven lamps, which John tells us are the seven spirits of God
- There are a couple views on who the ‘seven spirits of God’ are
 - I think the majority of people believe this to be a description of the Holy Spirit

- Seven being the number of perfection and this being a description of the perfect and complete description of the Holy Spirit
- Others believe that these seven spirits of God are actually the angels God uses throughout the book
 - To be sent out to give off God's message
 - Rev 5:6 "And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and **seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth**"
 - Rev 8: 2 "And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets
- The ones "sent out" into all the earth are the seven angels who give off the message
 - They are the ones who blow the seven trumpets. They are the ones that dump the bowls of wrath out
 - And these are the seven angels who stand before God on His throne
- I tend to lean towards angels, but really neither view does any damage
 - And since the Word does not offer enough information for us to be dogmatic about it
 - We hold these types of views with an open hand.

Verse 6 Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back."

- Now, before the throne was a sea of glass that looked to John like crystal
 - Later in chapter 15 we see this sea of glass mingled with fire
 - And in the midst of God's throne and around it were these eye dappled creatures – four of them in total
- There is much that has been offered up by godly men as explanations for what John is seeing here
 - A lot of conjecture to the meaning of the glassy sea and on who, or what, these 4 beast are
- And while I will give you my perspective,
 - I think we would be remiss if we missed the primary perspective
 - And that is this: That heaven and God's presence is unlike anything else!

- That what we are being privileged to see and speculate to a degree on
 - Is so grand and so wondrous, that human language seems insufficient to describe the sheer magnitude and awesomeness of heaven and God's presence!
- And here is the main application point:
 - All this, and so much more, awaits us who love Jesus!
 - So as I try to expound on what I see, let us not look past this main point!

What is this sea and what are these 4 living creatures?

- I think to understand what John is seeing; we need to, again, have the right perspective.
 - You see, what is in heaven is actually reality.
 - What we see dimly from our vantage point is actually reality.
 - God is reality. Heaven is reality.
 - This is much more reality than what we are experiencing here on earth
- I point this out, because in Hebrews chapter 8 we read this:
 - **"8** Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, **2** a Minister of the *sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*
 - **3** For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. **4** For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; **5** *who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*[a] **6** But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."

Do you see the reality in these verses?

- That in heaven is the true sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord made and not man

- But, Moses was instructed by God to make a tabernacle on earth, listen, “according to the pattern” that God had shown him.
 - “According to the pattern.” To the pattern of what? Of the heavenly model.
- See, what this passage is teaching us is that the sanctuary and tabernacle that Moses had made
 - Was just a copy and shadow of reality. They were a copy of the pattern of what existed in heaven
 - What the priests did, the tools they used, the structures within,
 - Even the set up of the camp around the tabernacle
 - All were instructed by God to be a shadow copy of what was reality in heaven.
- That is the perspective we are to have.
 - And without that perspective, we can come away with really askew
 - and sometimes very bizarre understanding of what we are see in heaven. – which is the reality of things.

So with that foundational truth, let’s ask the questions again.

- First, what is this sea of glass?
 - Does the pattern, given by God to Moses, hold any clues?
 - I think it might.
- In Exodus 30 we read this :
 - “**17** Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **18** “You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, **19** for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. **20** When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the Lord, they shall wash with water, lest they die. **21** So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.”
- When God gave Moses instruction on how to build the tabernacle
 - One of the pieces that stood right before the tent, in front of the tent that housed the holy place and the Holy of Holies
 - Was a bronze or brass laver – a wash basin (laver 1)
 - This laver was referred to as “the sea”
- And before one could meet or serve the Lord in the temple

- They would have to wash their hands and feet. The needed to clean their hands and feet (laver 2)
 - And if they didn't they would die
 - Ex. 40: **30** He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; **31** and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it. **32** Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the Lord had commanded Moses”

Look, every Jew that knows their OT, knows exactly what the glassy sea in Revelation is referencing.

- Just like the sea, the laver, was before the tabernacle
 - So too we see a sea before the throne of God
 - Every Jew knew what God was referencing
- But there is a significant difference between the copy and the reality
 - The copy was the water; the reality was a solid transparent crystal sea
 - That sea was before the throne and was no longer water

You see, on earth there was a need to cleans oneself of the filth of the world

- But in heaven, there's no longer a need to be cleansed. No one gets a washing in heaven
 - It's already taken care of! You have already been washed!
 - How interesting is this when we ponder the washing of the disciple's feet by the Lord during the feast of the Passover.
 - But that's a study for another time

This glassy sea before the Lord's throne is the reality of the copy of the sea, the bronze laver,

- given to Moses in the wilderness for the cleansing of those that served God in His temple
 - And is a picture of the washing away of uncleanness by the atonement of Jesus Christ
 - No longer a water sea, but a transformed sea of pure crystal
- And thank God the laver in heaven will be turned to crystal.
 - The day will come when the saints of God will never need confession. . . .

- We will never have to go to the Heavenly Father again to tell Him I have sinned. . .
 - The laver is of crystal only because all the saints of all the ages will have been made like the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be no more sin. (*Adapted from Barnhouse*)

Before the throne there is a glassy sea, “And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back”

- There is also these creatures before God’s throne.
 - John sees four of them immediately sees eyes on them – in back and in front
 - And he goes on to give a description...verse 7
 - “The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. **8** *The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”
- The word “creature” or as some versions say, “beast”, is really a bad translation
 - The word itself is <zo’on>, from where we get our English word “zoo”
 - And it really means “living being”
 - They are not man, they are not animal
 - They are something unique and unlike anything we have here on earth

The Bible holds some clues as to who, or what, they might be.

- First, let me briefly point out their obvious purpose
 - They are they worship God.
 - Day and night, they cry out “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”
 - And so we know that their primary purpose of existence is to praise and worship God Almighty
- We also learn from verse **9**
 - “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the

twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: **11** “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

- So not only do they themselves worship God at all times
 - But they give the call to worship for others as well
 - Kind of like a call and response
 - More on that in a moment
- But before we get into what, it’s good for us to know the why
 - They worship and they, apparently, are the worship leaders in heaven

In the book of Isaiah, Isaiah is given a vision of the throne of God

- And in that passage we see a description of the throne room and also see more insight into these six-winged creatures
 - **6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. **2** Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **3** And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord of hosts; the whole earth *is* full of His glory!”
- Notice a couple things:
 - First, Isaiah describes these as having six wings and tells us that these six-winged creatures are “seraphim”
 - Seraphim is plural for ‘seraph’
 - Seraph are a class, for lack of better words, of angel
 - We also see that these creatures are stationary – they “stood”
 - And are said to be worshipping crying out “holy holy holy....”
- And although Isaiah does not mention the faces,
 - Right away we know what he’s seeing – he is seeing what John is describing in Revelation
 - And so we quickly learn that these four living creatures are seraphim
 - They are a high and special class of angelic beings

Now, at this point I’d like to mention that many marry the vision of Ezekiel in Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10

- To that of Isaiah’s vision and John’s first-hand view

- And many, many very good Bible teachers and expositors hold this view
 - Mostly, because Ezekiel describes the four living creatures that he sees as resembling the faces of the four living creatures we see in Revelation
 - The lion, the man, the eagle, the ox
 - And if you do, that's totally fine. It doesn't change any of the message
- But for me, even though there are similarities, the differences are too significant to ignore
 - While I don't have the time to go through in detail, I'll just briefly share the differences I see.
 - I would highly encourage you to review his vision at home. Ezekiel 1 and 10
 - And hold on to your hats...it's wild stuff! 😊
- But briefly, the difference I see are
 - First, the beings in Ez have 4 wings – not six
 - They also have hands under their wings – which we don't see in Rev
 - And while Ezekiel describes them with the same faces
 - Each creature that Ezekiel saw had ALL of the faces – not just one a piece as we see in Revelation
 - Also, Revelation describes the creatures themselves as being full of eyes
 - But in Ezek we don't see the creatures having eyes, but rather the wheels in the vision
 - The description we see in Isaiah and in Revelation show beings who are stationary – they don't move from around the throne
 - But the creatures in Ezek are mobile.
 - They seem to attend God's *chariot throne* which transports the manifestation of His glory.
 - The last difference I see is that Ezek. in chapter 10 calls them "cherubim", not seraphim as we see in Isaiah.

To me, it seems that we have two different classes of angels that are somewhat similar in appearance

- But yet have a different function and role in serving the Lord
 - Again, this is my view on it and, in the end, it really doesn't matter too much
 - It's a fun study and one I highly encourage since we're talking about the heaven in which awaits us!

- But that's what I think the four living creatures of Revelation are. Seraphim that lead worship in heaven
 - That they are honored angels to be attending to God's glory at His throne.

Now, what about how they're described verse 7?

- "The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle"
 - What in the world could that mean?
- Again, there are many views from great teachers
 - As Vincent says "The interpretations of the symbols of the four living creatures are, of course, numerous and varied. Some of them are ...the four cardinal virtues; the four faculties or powers of the human soul; the Lord in the fourfold great events of redemption; the four patriarchal churches; the four great apostles, the doctors of the Church; the four principal angels"
 - There are a lot of views
- Early church fathers saw the creatures as symbols of the four gospels of the Bible
 - That they represent the four primary roles of Jesus in the gospels
 - Matthew presents Jesus as King (Matthew) which would be the Lion
 - Servant (Mark) as the ox (calf)
 - Man (Luke) represented by the man
 - God (John) as the eagle
 - Problem is that the early church fathers couldn't agree on which animal belongs to which book
 - And, of course, there is no biblical support

If, as we've already discovered this morning, if scripture informs us that the earthly patterns given by God

- are often a shadow of a greater heavenly reality.
 - Then I don't think it's a great surprise that we find similarities between Israel's encampment in the wilderness around the tabernacle of meeting
 - and the heavenly realm surrounding God's throne.
- In fact, in my opinion,
 - Given the level of detail given in God's instructions concerning the encampment

- I think it would be unusual if there were no symbolism to be found in it.

In the book of Numbers, God instructs Moses to number the people of Israel by tribe

- 12 tribes of Israel, numbered by Moses
 - And given very specific instruction on how and where to set up camp in relation to the tabernacle of meeting
 - Here's a picture (Big Picture of Wild. Tab or Wilderness Tabernacle 1 pic)
- In the center of the camp is the tabernacle of meetings. (Wilderness Tabernacle 2 pic)
 - The tent where the Shekinah glory was – God's presence – was in the holy of holies (Tabernacle 3 pic)
 - Along with the Ark of the Covenant with the 10 commandments, Aaron's rod that budded and the jar of manna
- And outside the Holy of Holies was the holy place
 - With the alter of incense, table of showbread and the golden candlesticks
 - Just outside the tent was the bronze laver and the brazen altar

And surrounding the presence of God on earth, are all the tribes of Israel – all numbered by amount of men over the age of 20

- And they were placed in specific areas around the tabernacle
 - So picture this in your mind...
 - The camp of Judah, which consisted of the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, for a total of 186,400 men,
 - And they were commanded to camp to the east (Num. 2:3-7).
- The camp of Reuben, consisting of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad totaled 151,450 men,
 - And they were commanded to camp to the south (Num. 2:10-16).
- The camp of Ephraim, consisting of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, a total of 108,100 men,
 - camped to the west (Num. 2:18-24).
- And last, the camp of Dan, consisting of the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali – totaling 157,600 men,
 - And they were commanded to camp to the north (Num. 2:25-31).

And so in all, you have 12 tribes broken into 4 camps that are positioned around the tabernacle of God

- And really, surrounding the Ark of the Covenant which, laid upon that, was the Mercy seat
 - Which represents the Throne of God
 - Do you see this layout in your mind?
- Now, each camp, again, four in total
 - Each group, as we learn in Numbers 2:2, was to “camp by his own **standard**, beside the **emblems** of his father’s house”
 - The word for *his own standard* is <diġlô> , means “to put up the flag” and is used of “a troop with banners”.
 - And so what this is saying is that each troop is to camp by their own flag – their own banner
 - Can you possibly guess what insignia were placed on each banner?
- Scripture doesn’t give us the character of the standard.
 - However, it’s is very interesting that according to rabbinical tradition,
 - the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion
 - Which makes complete sense as we see later in Revelation that Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
- The other banners
 - that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man’s head,
 - Ephraim the figure of an ox,
 - and that of Dan the figure of an eagle;
- My personal thought is that the four living creatures described in Revelation, and Ezekiel as well, were represented upon these four standards.
 - And so again, we see the copy here on earth of the heavenly reality

Now, one last thing about these creatures in relation to the encampment in Israel

- I drew attention to the count of the people of the tribes
 - Judah had 186,400
 - Reuben had 151,450
 - Ephraim 108,100
 - And Dan 157,600
 - Both Judah and Dan were on opposite ends

- And Reuben and Dan, which were relatively equal in size, were also on opposite ends from one another
- The specific instructions from God is that they were to be placed in the east, west, north and south
 - There was no SE, or NW, or SW...
 - Very specifically to the east, to the north and so on
 - And so these camps went straight out from the position of the tabernacle
 - In a block formation to stay within the specific parameters given by God
 - With me?

Keep that in mind. Tuck that vision away for a moment.

- Later on in the book of Numbers in chapter 22 we are introduced the king of Moab – enemies of Israel
 - The king's name was Balak
 - And in fear of being conquered by Israel, Balak hired a false prophet by the name of Balaam
 - You might remember him- he had a talking donkey
- Balaam was hired to put a curse on Israel
 - And in the last verse of Chapter 22, we read “**41** So it was, the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.”
 - Balaam was taken high up on one of the mountains to get a view of the camp of Israel
 - And as he speaks there, presumably to pronounce a curse on the people
 - What comes out of his mouth was all blessing!
He could not, not bless Israel
- So Balak took Balaam to another high spot to get another perspective in which to see the camp of Israel.
 - And again, he was unable to curse them. Nothing but blessing from his mouth.
 - And then a third time, to a different high spot – with the same results

My point here is not to explain why the blessings came from Balaam rather than cursings.

- But to bring a perspective. I high, 40,000 foot visual perspective of what Balak may have seen

- See, as he's looking down, seeing the entirety of the camp of Israel
 - He sees the tent in the middle with God's presence, and 4 camps blocked and in a straight line
 - Protruding in all four direction
- The longest block of troops is in the east, from Judah's camp with 186k people
 - And the shortest is in the west, in the camp of Ephraim with 108k people
 - And on either side, the north and the south,
 - Are Dan and Rueben – who have nearly the same amount of people
 - 151k and 157k
- And so when he looked down, it is entirely possible that **this is what he saw (Israel Encampment pic)**
 - His view may have been that of the shape of a cross!
 - Of course he would not have found any significance like we do
 - But if this is indeed what he saw.....WOW!
 - We serve an awesome and mighty God
 - Who constantly reveals the cross throughout the pages of the Bible.

So, these four living creatures in Revelation,

- it is entirely possible that we see a representation of them in the encampment instructions
 - given by God to the children of Israel in the wilderness
- And just as they surround the throne in worship and leading of worship
 - So, too, those encamped around the throne in the tabernacle were turned inward to worship God

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: **11** "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Crowns: Imperishable crown (running the race to win); Rejoicing (the presence of the Lord); Righteousness (waiting in hvn for those that love His appearing); Glory (when Jesus appears – does no fade); Life (be faithful unto death);