

## AN EXPOSITION OF REVELATION 4:1-3: A GLIMPSE OF GLORY:

Rev. Paul R. Shockley

www.prshockley.org

### I. Introduction:

When we are personally or even remotely faced with horrific events of suffering, whether moral (such as murder, incest, rape) or natural (hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, diseases, and tidal waves) we may have asked the question “*Where is God? Where is He?*” “*Where is He in this?*” Why does He allow us to go through certain painful circumstances? We may even find it difficult to imagine what reasons God could have in allowing a certain painful situation, trauma, or event to take place. Why did God allow emperors like Nero or fanatics like Hitler or Stalin come to power? Why does He allow murder, rape, death by horrific diseases, famine etc? Or more personally, why does he allow people we love to be killed (e.g., such as the death my seventeen year old brother, Jimmy, who had a promising Olympic sporting career).

*Well, just because we find it difficult to imagine what reasons God could have does not mean that no such reason exists.* From our **finite viewpoint** we are only able to see a few threads of God’s overarching will. Like watching an opera from a poor vantage point, from afar, we are unable to discern all the details, make out the words, or see the facial expressions.

But even from our very **limited vantage point** we are not in the dark. Our heavenly Father who is sovereignly directing history, unfolding His plan of the ages, asks us to trust Him obediently as we live in this world of suffering, much in the same way my children trust me when I take them to the doctor. When I have to make a decision for my sons or daughter that may very well involve pain such as the treatment of a doctor; from their viewpoint they may not fully understand why I let the medical doctor do what he or she needs to do. I assure them, despite the pain, let’s say from a needle, it is in their best interest to receive appropriate medical care. Thus, they are placing their trust in me that this pain is only temporary and their immediate and hopefully remote future will have a better outlook.<sup>1</sup>

Let’s look at pain and suffering from a **different viewpoint**: From the vantage point of Calvary God did not spare Himself. In the midst of the shame and horror of the historic crucifixion, and in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ we see glory, beauty, victory over death, and eternal life. The God of the Bible brings eternal hope, peace, and redemption in the midst of pain, suffering, and bloodshed as He substituted Himself for us: “*Him who knew no sin became sin for us.*” From this event of suffering and death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus brings bountiful blessings (a) *positionally* when we place our trust in Him for salvation, (b) *experientially* when we conform to His character by yielding to Him, and (c) one day *perfectly*, when we are in His heavenly presence with no longer having the experience of the “*warring within.*”

From a theological and philosophical **reference point** the only way we can ultimately discern and distinguish good from evil is the belief in God-for He alone is the only one who can be the absolute reference point for defining and distinguishing what is *good from evil*. Thus, when the non-believer, such as an agnostic or atheist, claim something is objectively good or bad (e.g., war is always unjust; the Holocaust was pure evil; rape is always wrong), they inadvertently claim the

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Rhodes, “Tough Questions About Evil” in *Who Made God? And Answers to over 100 other Tough Questions of Faith*, edited by Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 45.

existence of God-all from the backdoor. For how you can determine a line to be crooked if you have no knowledge of a straight line!<sup>2</sup> So God uses the force and logic of the moral law argument to soften hard hearts like C.S. Lewis and Eleanor Stumpf to the Christian faith, to show them what they already know to be true.<sup>3</sup>

**The bottom line:** Even though we don't have *the full picture* we are able to trust God; we are able to trust Him because he implores us too in His written Word, because Jesus himself provided that example when He pitched His tent in our midst, always seeking to glorify the Father, and because God designed us to be dependent upon Him intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally. And so even though our "whys" may never be answered, we know we can trust Him because He is absolutely perfect: He is holy and worthy to receive power, honor, and glory. He will never do anything less than His infinite perfect best for God is absolutely and unequivocally sovereign. Stated differently, He, who is here and He is not silent, possesses infinite-perfect integrity. See sees all; He knows all.

To us believers in this church age this fact is comforting. To the person who becomes a believer following the Rapture, during the Great Tribulation and prior to the Second Coming, it will be a comforting truth as well, esp. in view of the divine judgments that will destroy civilization as we know it and the temporary dominion of the Anti-Christ who will seek to kill them and the Jews. But for the unbeliever, the idea of God's presence and position will not be a comforting truth. In rebellion they will raise their fists against Him, identify themselves with the Anti-Christ and His satanic opposition against God, and seek to destroy the Jews. And thus, because of God's presence, position, and person, His plan to bring the Israel nation to repentance and purge the world of wickedness includes three series of tribulational judgments: the Seal, Trumpet, and, the Bowl Judgments (Rev. 6-19).

Therefore, chapters 4 and 5 form a prologue to the Tribulation events. They present **God's viewpoint** of the horrific judgments that will be poured out on the earth. In fact, it has been said that we cannot really understand the nature and purposes of the Great Tribulation judgments without this heavenly scene. So, in these two chapters, John was given "heaven's perspective of earthly events as he walked through the door that was opened to him in 4:1 [Charles Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 33]."<sup>4</sup>

But even with that said we have to be mindful that "Revelation 4-5 presents reverent heavenly worship that focuses on the holiness of the Father and the worthiness of the Son."<sup>5</sup> As Dr. Ron Allen states, "These heavenly previews give us focal points for the subject of our worship, namely, God the Father and Jesus our Redeemer, and they emphasize that our worship of God will endure into eternity."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See C. S. Lewis's, *Mere Christianity*.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Budziszewski's *What You Can't Not Know* for a thought provoking study of natural and moral law.

<sup>4</sup> Hampton Keathley, III in "Introduction to Things Predictive (Rev. 4:1-22:1)" in [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

<sup>5</sup> Ronald B. Allen, *The Wonder of Worship* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2001), 205.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

**This evening I am going to begin by examining the first three verses of Revelation 4 whereby we will concern ourselves with God’s presence, position, and power as the One who is Sitting on the Throne. Afterwards, we will ask ourselves how we should then live.**

***Transition:***

As we turn our attention to God’s presence, position, and power as the One who is sitting on the Throne, I need to set the logical and literary context. So far in our study of Revelation we have examined three major events in chronological order following the outline of the book Jesus gave us in Revelation 1:19:

*“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are and the things which will take place after this.”*

1. In chapter 1 we have John’s vision of the glorified Jesus Christ: ***The things which you have seen;***
2. In chapters 2-3 we have tailored messages to seven historical churches which are applicable to churches in this church age in Chapters 2-3: ***“The things which are”***;
3. Then beginning in chapter 4 we are introduced to the ***“The things to come”*** which begin with the One sitting on the throne.

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| <b>Exposition: Rev. 4:1</b> |
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- A. If I could summarize chapter 4 in one statement I would say that chapter 4 offers a threefold description: ***John describes his transition to a state than enabled him to view the heavenly throne room in order to show both the person and location where the Great Tribulational judgments will originate.*** To be sure, the heavenly throne room does not reveal a *“cosmic demon”* that plays with us as if we are some chess game for his hedonistic amusement. No, he is no evil genie. Rather, we will see a Sovereign Creator God who is infinitely holy, just, gracious, and merciful; one to whom alone all worship is due. As Dr. John F. Walvoord states, *“Here is the true picture of the universe being subject to the dominion of an omnipotent God.”*<sup>7</sup>
- B. **1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.”**
- C. Let’s make some observations regarding verse 1:
  1. The Apostle John is invited to heaven. When you see the phrase ***“after these things”*** (*meta taute*) it seems to imply the beginning of a new vision. The first vision had extended from Revelation 1:10-3:22. In essence, the scene changes from a picture of the glorified Jesus Christ walking in the midst of the churches to that of the Father in the heavenly throne room.
  2. John ***“looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.”*** By using the word ***“behold”*** John calls special attention to an opened door.

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<sup>7</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 104.

- a. Don't you find it interesting that a "**door**" is used? So far in Revelation we have already seen two references to doors. It is used in Rev. 3:8 to refer to an open door which no one can shut. In that passage it may refer to the entrance into heaven and the New Jerusalem. It is also used in Rev. 3:20 to refer to a door where Jesus stands at the door and is knocking, seeking entrance into His own church. In sum, reference to door is used four times in the Book of Revelation.
  - b. But this door is different. This is a special door opened for John whereby he was taken up through the door into God's very presence in the court of heaven, thus the door's location is in heaven-one again-into the very court room of God. The fact that the door is opened indicates that the door had been opened and left that way for the apostle's arrival (passive voice of the verb). It also enhances the fact that this is divine revelation, divine disclosure.<sup>8</sup>
3. As John looks upon the door, the apostle receives specific instructions from the glorified Christ "***in a voice like a trumpet.***" Scholars tend to think that this is Christ speaking because in Revelation 1:10 John makes a comment that refers to Jesus' voice as a trumpet. When John was in the Spirit, he heard behind him a loud voice as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "*What you see, write in book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.*" Thus, the voice of Jesus summons John upward: "***Come up here, and I will show you the things which must take place after this.***" Notice, that this is not a two-way conversation: Christ is speaking to John.
  4. This summons is somewhat similar to the command God gave Moses in Exodus 19:18-20: "*Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered Him by voice. 20 Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.*"
  5. In both cases you have a note of authority in the summons to come up here with the purpose that Christ will show him what must take place after these things. Some scholars connect John's summons with the pretribulational rapture of the church for two reasons:
    - a. First, the similarity between this summons and the one the church is awaiting for at any moment;
    - b. Secondly, there is no reference to the church between Revelation 4:1-22:16.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: Exegetical Commentary*, 335.

6. I suggest that this is unlikely for this notion because the two events are quite distinctive for two fundamental reasons:
  - a. John's body remained on Patmos throughout His experience, whereas at the rapture of the church the bodies of the church age believers will be translated and taken up to heaven.
  - b. John's summons is a command to receive revelation regarding the Tribulation whereas following the rapture we will be before the Judgment Seat of Christ.
7. As Robert Thomas States, "This summons is best understood as an invitation for John to assume a new vantage point for the sake of revelation he was about to receive."<sup>9</sup>
8. When Jesus says, "***I will show you what must take place after these things***" I want you to notice that these future events are not merely probable, they are fixed. This is clear because Jesus uses the words, "***must***" (*dei*). These are fixed, determined, binding events because they are the outworking of God's will, His decrees. So, immediately, the predictions that follow in this Book remind us that God is sovereignly in control over both human and (may I say) cosmic history (e.g., heavenlies).
9. When he states in the last part of this verse, "***I will show you what must take place after these things***," focusing upon the phrase "***after these things***" it seems he is referring to what will follow after the church age has run its course in Revelation 2-3.<sup>10</sup>

Let's now move to examine verses 2-6:

**2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.**

### III. Rev. 4:2-3:

- A. In this prophetic ecstatic trance whereby his ears hear, his eyes saw, and his emotions were as real as though his body were literally in heaven, John receives his second revelation when he states "***Immediately was in the Spirit***" (*egenomen*; "***I came to be***"; *eutheos*, "***immediately***"). It seems that this is somehow a spiritual ecstasy or trance into which he was transported in heaven.
- B. "***And behold, a throne was standing open in heaven.***" The NET has "*a throne standing in in heaven,*" the ASV has "*a throne set in heaven,*" Phillips has "*a throne had been set up in heaven,*" the NIV has "*there was a throne in heaven,*" and the RSV has, "*a throne*

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 337.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

*stood in heaven.*” Notice that there is no description of the throne. All we know is that throne, in Greek originally might have been used as teacher’s chair or a judge’s bench. Later this word came to be reserved for kings and gods. The word throne is used 37 times in Revelation whereas it is used 15 other times in the N.T. This idea of God’s throne, esp. associated with the Temple is a prominent part of the O.T. For example, ***let me read a portion of Psalm 9.***

- C. Sometimes the O.T. pictures heaven itself as God’s throne (Isaiah 66:1) and sometimes sees Him enthroned in heaven. Listen to the following passages:

**Psalm 11:4-7:** *“The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord’s throne is in heaven. His eyes watch; his eyes examine all people. 11:5 The Lord approves of the godly, but he hates the wicked and those who love to do violence. 11:6 May the Lord rain down burning coal and brimstone on the wicked! A whirlwind is what they deserve! 11:7 Certainly the Lord is just; he rewards godly deeds; the upright will experience his favor.*

**Psalm 47:8-9:** *God reigns over the nations! God sits on his holy throne! 47:9: The nobles of the nations assemble, along with the people of the God of Abraham, for God has authority over the rulers of the earth. He is highly exalted.*

- D. The verb here, “**set, stand, to be laid, to lie**” (ekeito, a passive imperfect of keimai which may be used as the passive of *tithēmi*) may mean “*to lay, place, or set something.*” It could be translated as, “*a throne was being placed in heaven,*” or “*a throne had been placed in heaven.*” Some have argued that John is explaining to us that this throne was purposefully set in heaven for the coming events or judgments; this is not his eternal throne. If that is the case, then John saw the throne being set and then he saw the One sitting on the throne is one that is designed especially set for the Tribulation judgments. Some have tried to substantiate that view by appealing to passages such as Psalm 9:7: “*He has established His throne for judgment*” and Dan. 7:9: “*I kept looking until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat ...*” See also Dan. 7:13-14).<sup>11</sup>
- E. I take it that the throne is merely standing in its place because John just “arrived” in heaven and “**behold**”, he first sees an established throne.<sup>12</sup>
- F. Now we come to the climax of John’s look into the heavenly throne room. “**And upon the throne [was] one sitting.**” This person is God the Father because He is distinguished from the Lamb in chapter 5:5, 7: 5:16; 7:10, and from the Holy Spirit in 4:5.
- G. Look how he is referred to in this passage: “**And upon the throne [was] one sitting.**” ***Why didn’t John name Him more directly?***
1. It could be that he was unwilling to use His divine name for the same reason it is reverently avoided among Jews.
  2. It could be that it is impossible to express in one word the awesomeness of Him who is the sum-total of His infinite Perfections.

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<sup>11</sup> Keathley, “Introduction to Things Predictive (Rev. 4:1-22:1)” in [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

<sup>12</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 340.

3. Interestingly, John gives a detailed expression of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1 but does not do so here with God of the Father; we don't even have any anthropomorphic expressions mentioned here.
  4. While it certainly may be that John was willing to use His divine name out of reverence or that no single word could bring even a "*smidgen*" of the overwhelming, breathtaking, and astounding of His person, I submit that if He gave those details here we would be lost in the moment and never come around to see the direct point here: God wants his readers to know that He is the Sovereign Glorious God Who is in absolute control; He is sovereign. So, when the judgments come forth in the Great Tribulation, those on earth may know that it is from His hand, He is control, He is God, and there is no other such as the Anti-Christ. This is the deep breath he wants the readers to experience before the storm of judgments that are soon to follow.
- H. I believe this idea is substantiated if we very carefully look at the word "*sitting*"; it is used twice, almost in immediate succession. First it is used in verse 2 then immediately again in verse 3 "***and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting.***" The repetition of this word "*sitting*" and the fact that it this word "*sitting*" is in present tense (participles; *kathemenos*) denotes the activity of our God firmly reigning as the supreme, sovereign ruler; God is in control. As the N.T. scholar Lenski states, "*Sitting is not rest but reigning as when a ruler is on his throne, with his power ruling his domain.*"<sup>13</sup>
- I. John now moves to describe the "***One sitting on the throne***" (vs. 3).
- 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.**
- J. There are occasions in Scripture where God and His throne are seen by His people. Consider the following:
- Exodus 24:10:** God appears standing on a pavement of sapphire;
- 1 Kings 22:19:** He is seen on His throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the Temple.
- Ezekiel 1:26-28:** God and His throne are like the brilliance of glowing metal, fire and brightness all around.
- Daniel 7:9:** His clothing was white as snow and His throne as fiery flames and many thousands were standing before Him
- But here in Revelation 4 our sovereign Lord is described in terms of two precious stones, the jasper and the sardius. Rather than human-like characteristics to describe God, God is described in gem-like colors.

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<sup>13</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, repr. (Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 170.

K. We need to recall that God’s essential glory cannot be fully disclosed to man. God’s Word declares that God “*dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen, or can see*” (1 Tim. 6:16). So these gem-like colors are used to portray something of God’s eternal glory, awesome holiness, and majesty.

1. “**Jasper.**” This was a clear, crystal-like gem, a translucent rock, possibly even a diamond. To equate the modern jasper (which is green and rather opaque in color) to an ancient stone called jasper is a bit misleading.<sup>14</sup> Rather, this ancient jasper offers a word picture of the purity and brilliance of God’s holiness (see Rev. 21:1; 21:19). Since such a stone picks up and reflects light, it calls our attention to the fact that God is light, a holy God who reveals, and unmask the darkness.<sup>15</sup>

2. “**Sardius.**” This stone is a fiery deep red stone, most likely a carnelian. In antiquity, it was most often the one used for engraved stones. This stone symbolizes God’s wrath and justice. Some scholars have argued that it may also be symbolic of His redemptive work of love and grace in the person of the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world through His death on the cross.<sup>16</sup>

a. It seems most probable that these two gem-colors together symbolically offer a word picture of the holiness, wrath, and justice of God because of the same mixture of white light with fire which is reminiscent of O.T. and apocalyptic visions of divine majesty in such passages like Ezek. 1:4; 8:2; Dan. 7:0; and Rev. 1:14.<sup>17</sup> For example:

1. In Ezekiel’s vision of God’s glory he writes in Ezekiel 1:4: “*As I watched, I saw a windstorm coming from the north-an enormous cloud surrounded by bright light. There was also a flashing fire and in the fire something like a glowing substance. 1:5 In the fire were what looked like four living beings.*” [Net Bible].

2. Then after his description of the four living beings and the chariot platform, he states in 1:26, “*Above the platform over their heads was something like a throne made of sapphire. On the throne high above, was a form that appeared to be a man, 1:27 I saw a glowing substance that looked like fire enclosed all around from his waist up. From his waist down I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a brilliant light around it.*” 1:28, *The appearance of the brilliant light all around him was like a rainbow in the clouds after the rain. This was the*

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<sup>14</sup> Net Bible, footnote, pg. 2274.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 342; Lenski, *Interpretation of Revelation*, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Walvoord, *Revelation*, 104-5; Keathley, “Introduction to Things Predictive (Rev. 4:1-22:1)” in [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 342.

*appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I threw myself down with my face to the ground, and I heard someone's voice speaking.*" [Net Bible].

- b. Dr. Walvoord makes an interesting observation about these two stones. He states that in the Old Testament these stones had a special relationship to the tribes of Israel. Each tribe had a representative stone which the High Priest wore on his priestly garment. As the High Priest, he was representing each tribe before God at the altar. The Jasper was the stone representing the first tribe, the tribe of Reuben. Reuben means "*Behold a Son*". The last tribe, Benjamin was represented by the Sardius. Benjamin means "*Son of my right hand*." So these two stones may also have special application to Israel if it represents the whole nation of Israel, the first tribe, the last tribe and all in between.<sup>18</sup> Surely, these two stones too remind the nation Israel of the claims of Jesus Christ: "*Behold a Son*" and "*Son of my right hand*."
  
- L. But if these gem-like colors represent God's holiness, wrath and justice, it may very well be tempered by what follows in verse 3. "***And there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.***" As part of the majesty and glory of this heavenly scene of our sovereign reigning God, John saw a beautiful rainbow of emerald green.
  1. First, notice that it is a rainbow. No doubt this rainbow is reminiscent of the covenant God made with Noah (4: with Gen. 15:1; 4:1 with Exodus 19:20 24; 4:5 with Ex. 19:16; 4:8 with Exodus 3:14; 4:11 with Gen. 1:1).

As Robert Thomas states, "it is a reminder that God's mercy is as great as His majesty; i.e., that there will be no triumph of God's sovereignty at the expense of His mercy. The disasters portrayed in the following pages cannot be interpreted as meaning that God has forgotten His promise to Noah."<sup>19</sup>
  2. Secondly, notice that the rainbow encircles the throne. However, no indication is given as to the relationship of the rainbow to the throne. In other words, we don't know if the rainbow encircles the throne vertically, horizontally, or even diagonally.<sup>20</sup>
  3. And third, the rainbow is distinguishable from other rainbows because it has a green color, "***like an emerald.***" We know of rainbows as having seven colors. Perhaps, the best answer is that the rainbow possessed a number of shades of green similar to a rainbow. Green is typically used to represent life and fruitfulness. But N.T. scholars like Robert Thomas & Lenski contend that in this case it is used to refer to the grace and mercy of God.<sup>21</sup> Lenski states:

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<sup>18</sup> Keathley, "Introduction to Things Predictive (Rev. 4:1-22:1)" in [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 343.

<sup>20</sup> George Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 344.

This bow has only the one color, emerald green which symbolizes grace. This bow is about the throne and hence it is not added to the diamond and the sard color of the One on the throne. These jewels represent the divine attributes of the Person himself; the green bow indicates the effects of this Person's rule manifested in these attributes. It is his rule and dominion as exercised that shine like a bow of grace.<sup>22</sup>

If the emerald green depicts grace, it most certainly reinforces the allusion of God's mercy.<sup>23</sup> It is as if he is saying to Israel and the world who is about to enter into the Great Tribulation, "*Turn to me through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the first begotten Son, and I will pour out my grace and mercy to you for the Great Tribulation, which is decreed in my fixed plan, is about to come upon you.*" Even during the Great Tribulation mercy and grace is possible in the midst of a horrific series of divine judgments.

## II. How Should We Then Live in view of verses 1-3:

Having considered Revelation 4:1-3 whereby we see a heavenly depiction that affirms God's presence, position, and power as the One who His Sitting on the Throne, how we should then live?

We see a very life-changing fact: God, who is present, is the Sovereign Ruler. As C.A. Scott states:

"His presence scintillating with the brilliance of a diamond, glowing like a carnelian, with the concentrated redness of a furnace, and yet overarched with fresh and living green as of an emerald. Blinding brilliancy, the glowing of a consuming fire, the soft radiance of rainbow promise, these were the contrasted elements in the impression made upon the heart of the seer by the vision of Him who sat upon the throne."<sup>24</sup>

A. **I think if we could see Him as He is, we would immediately filter out the essential from the incidentals.** For example, we would give up our pettiness, the routine hum-drum of living, rekindle our intimacy with God, flee from sin, and unequivocally trust Him with all our circumstances, problems, and difficult situations.

### 1. **Pettiness:**

Mike Yaconelli, editor of the *Wittenburg Door* once wrote:

Petty people are ugly people. They are people who have lost their vision. They are people who have turned their eyes away from what matters and focused, instead, on what

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<sup>22</sup> Lenski, *Interpretation of Revelation*, 171-2.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 344.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted from Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 480. He cites it from C. A. Scott, *The Book of Revelation*, 156-7.

does not matter. The result is that the rest of us are immobilized by their obsession with the insignificant.

It is time to rid the church of pettiness. It is the time the church refused to be victimized by petty people. It is time the church stopped ignoring pettiness. It is the time church quite pretending that pettiness doesn't matter...

Pettiness has become a serious disease in the church of Jesus Christ-a disease which continues to result in terminal cases of discord, disruption, and destruction. Petty people are dangerous people because they appear to be only a nuisance instead of what they really are- a health hazard.<sup>25</sup>

George Will once stated, "*Pettiness is the tendency of people without large purposes.*"<sup>26</sup>

## **2. We would give up our rut of routine.**

There is a sign along an Alaskan highway that I am sure has brought a smile to motorists: "*Choose your rut carefully...you'll be in it for the next 150 miles.*"

I also think we would give up the routine after having a glimpse of glory. I would argue that many of us have no idea how deeply entrenched we are in the rut of the routine. Externally, everything looks great. We are involved in church, we have Christian friends, we study Scripture, and we meet needs. To be sure, faithfulness it is a big part of Christian maturity-we *need* to do those things.

But I would think that if we were called to heaven like John, we would come back immediately with a new direction, a new path; we would immediately jump out of that rut and strive enflamed for God. We would truly make it our singular aim and ambition to please Him. Prison couldn't hold us back and home arrest would be out of the question. In fact, I believe we would...

## **3. Rekindle our intimacy with God.**

Rekindle our intimacy with God. After being in His throne room seeing Him who is depicted with white light and fiery red with an emerald like rainbow encircling the throne, I suspect our minds would constantly dwell on it; I think we would be on our face in long periods of prayer. We would find that memory occupying our thoughts, our day dreams, etc. I think we would find ourselves lying on the grass, sitting on a front porch, taking long walks, pondering all the implications of the vision we received.

Moreover, we would be motivated like never before to worship God by turning the focus from us to the one who made us in His image. Dr. Allen states it so well, "True biblical worship concerns the whole of one's life; its ultimate meaning is rooted in one's

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<sup>25</sup> *The Wittenburg Door*, December 1984/January 1985, quoted from *The Finishing Touch* by Chuck Swindoll, 517.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 516.

wholehearted love for God.<sup>27</sup> I think it would not longer be so quickly said of some of us, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. *Flee from Sin.*

We would separate ourselves from that which is profane and wicked. We would proactively seek not to offend Him. We would whole heartily turn away from sinful appetites and fleshly tendencies because it is so ugly and He is so pure and beautiful. Our disposition would be like Ezekiel and Isaiah; woe unto us for we are sinful people.

#### 5. *Really be able to trust Him.*

**Going back full circle to our introduction-** I think after we saw Him, we would trust Him so much more with our circumstances, no matter how difficult they may become. After seeing Him, when we found ourselves faced with troubles, I bet our response would be “*God is well able to handle this.*” In fact, the “*What if’s*” would no longer be part of our vocabulary; no longer would we be immobilized by the unknown. See, “*Worry occurs when we assume responsibility for things which are outside of our control.*” If you saw God sitting on His throne, ruling and directing His plan for the ages, you and I would immediately realize that worry and faith never mix well.<sup>29</sup>

## IV. Conclusion:

***In conclusion:*** If John’s account is reliable (which we believe it is), then there is no need to experience the court of heaven in order to change our perspectives, mindset, and choices right now. We have enough information from His Word to apprehend that mindset, to cultivate that disposition. We are not in the dark; we are not outside the loop; we have received God’s memo and the memo says, “*I am present; I am the Sovereign ruler of the universe; I am Holy, I am Just, I am Gracious and Merciful.*” Therefore, let’s take God’s Word as our vantage point.

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<sup>27</sup> Allen, *The Wonder of Worship*, 55.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Swindoll, *The Finishing Touch*, 633.