

February 21, 2021

The Sunday View

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors!

You are our honored guests and we are pleased that you have chosen to visit us today. Our goal is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. This is a church of Christ; we are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church and we have no earthly “headquarters.” The six elders oversee this work and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily aimed at our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate at the entrance. Thank You

Schedule

The Lord's Day Assemblies

Three assembly opportunities,
in the building:

9:30 AM / 10:30 AM / 11:30 AM

Livestream at 10:30 at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLEmwy21YxrL7ZUgfiZTVqA>

Speaking today: David Posey
God: Our Awesome Creator
Revelation 4

Young People's Classes Today

High School & Up: 5 PM (Inside)
Contact David Posey for information at
(530) 558-5057

Middle School: 5 PM (Inside)
Contact Dan Stegall for information
(818) 209-9810

Weekly Online Classes

Tuesday 10 AM (“Conformed to Christ”)
Check with David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text @ 530-558-5057

Wednesday 7 PM (Faith: Hebrews 11)
Check with Jack Horak: jshorak98@gmail.com

Saturday AM Men's Breakfast
7 AM, second Saturday of the month
Contact Tyler Wade @ tyler@ppldev.com

Additional Online Classes

There are some other small online classes.
If you are interested in participating in one of them,
please contact David Posey

Information

Website & Online Presence

Visit our website at www.folsomchurch.com for updates and material on current and past classes, and recorded sermons and classes. You will also find a directory of churches on page one. If you are a member of the church here at Folsom, see one of the deacons or elders to inquire about access to the password -protected members section. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/folsomchurch>

Classes & Home Studies (Will resume soon)

We have classes for children from 18 months and up. Please see the map in the hallway or ask any of the members which room is appropriate for you and/or your child. There are several Bible studies in progress on Sunday afternoon and evening. Check with David Posey if you have questions.

Restrooms

There are two sets of restrooms: one off the first hallway to the right of the lobby and another at the end of the first hallway to the left. Ask anyone and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

For Small Children

There is a special room for nursing mothers and a separate “cry room” at the rear of the auditorium. You enter them from the first hallway to the right, across from the restrooms.

View & Junior View (Let us know if you don't get a copy)

Be sure to pick up a copy of the View and Junior View; both are sent out weekly to our member list and hard copies are printed on Sundays and available in the foyer.

Prayer Requests & News Items

Send to David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text at 530-558-5057

The Worship of God as Creator

Notes on Revelation 4

What would you give for a peek into the place where God dwells? Read Chapter 4, verse 1: “*after these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.*” John was ushered into the throne room of the almighty God, our heavenly Father, and the sight was indescribable. In his effort to describe the sight, A. W. Tozer said “it must have been like trying to pour the ocean into a tea cup.”

As we delve into this world of signs and symbols and figurative speech, we need to proceed with caution. The scenes we are privileged to see are to be viewed as a whole, with one main message: *God is on the throne, no matter what our experiences are telling us.* He rules and judges the entire universe and is worthy to be praised and honored and glorified. With that caveat, I offer these comments on some of the details we are introduced to in Revelation 4.

The door is open and on the throne sat One who had the appearance of jasper and carnelian stones (Jerusalem Bible: “diamond and a ruby”). An emerald rainbow encircled it, reminding one of the covenant God made with Noah and all creation. There is a lot of interesting speculation on what these precious stones represent. They are in the list of precious stones in Ezekiel 28:13 that describes the former glory of the King of Tyre. They are also found among the 12 stones in the breastplate of the High Priest and they appear in works by Plato as representative of *all* precious stones. It seems best to simply realize that God is giving John a vision of someone who is beautiful and precious.

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones with twenty-four elders sitting on them, clothed in white with crowns of gold on their heads. There are several possible explanations of the twenty-four elders. The most likely interpretation is that it refers to an exalted order of angels with special reference to the 24 priestly classes mentioned in I Chron. 24:1-9. “White” has reference to triumph and the crowns to their high place of honor (the Greek word *stephanos* is used which usually refers to a victory wreath. The other Greek word is *diadema* which usually applies to a diadem or crown of royalty. Here, it is possible that the *stephanos* refers to that victory, corresponding to the white robes, instead of to the thrones).

From the throne came the voice of God, depicted as “lightnings, thunderings and voices” (v. 5). The seven Spirits of God are seen as seven lamps of fire. In 1:4, the seven Spirits were understood to be the Holy Spirit in its full power and activity and that would certainly fit here. Before the throne, John saw a “sea of glass, clear as crystal” (v. 6). In the first century, “clear” glass was unusual and very costly. A legend from the Torah records that the Queen of Sheba, when she came to see Solomon, thought the clear glass pavement in front of his throne was real water. She therefore lifted her skirt as she approached. This may represent “distance” from the holy God to his creation but more likely, as Robert H. Mounce says, “we are intended to understand it as a visual

phenomenon which adds to the awesome splendor of the throne-room scene (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 137).

Near the throne and around the throne were four living creatures. They were in a place of honor and are depicted as attending God. In other places, we see them represented as:

1. Close to God’s throne, as here (5:6; 14:3)
2. Constantly praising God (4:8; 5:8, 14; 7:11; 19:4)
3. Associated with the outpouring of God’s wrath (6:1-7; 15:7)

The four living creatures are probably a representation of the whole of creation, though it is hard to say for certain. There was a Rabbinic saying dated circa AD 300 or so which went like this: “*The mightiest among the birds is the eagle, the mightiest among the domestic animals is the bull, the mightiest among the wild beasts is the lion and the mightiest among all is man.*” Some have applied that idea, expressed two centuries after Revelation, to this text though, again, that is simply a guess. In any case, as in Isaiah 6:2, the “wings” probably refers to their swiftness in rushing to do the will of God.

The reference to their eyes (“around and within”) would indicate that they are all-seeing and continually watchful. The four living creatures are continually praising God. Their chant is “holy, holy, holy.” “Holy” (*hagios*) is the only attribute of God that is given in triplicate in the Bible (see Isaiah 6:1ff). God is love, God is light, God is a consuming fire. God is many things but let there be no doubt: *God is holy!* “Holy” means different, separate, sanctified, set apart and it is the direct opposite of compromise with the world. Note that many of the sins that Jesus called out to churches in chapters 2 & 3 were sins of compromise with the pagan culture in which they lived. They were supposed to be holy — set apart (see I Peter 1:15-16) — but some had chosen to become one with the world instead.

The book of Revelation deals mainly with how God and His people answer evil, and that answer has its foundation in the absolute holiness of God. God in his holiness and power will be victorious over evil in the end. When glory and honor and thanks are poured out to God by the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders also bow down before Him. They throw down their crowns in a show of humility and honor (v. 10). It is because of His place as Creator that he is worthy to receive all glory, honor and power.

The picture of continuous worship to God is what stands out most graphically in this chapter. After John wrote to the churches on earth, he immediately saw a picture of God on His throne. It is the church’s place to work and labor and obey. It is God’s place to rule and to be honored and praised. We honor and praise God by our obedience. Someday, if we will remain “faithful unto death” (2:10), it will be our privilege to worship God for an eternity.

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Additional Notes on Revelation 4

Let's zoom in on two verses: Revelation 4:8 and 11. God is worthy of our worship because he is holy and because he created all things. V. 8 takes us back to Isaiah 6:1-7.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

We learn later that this describe Isaiah's vision of Jesus (cf. John 12:4) but the location is the same. Isaiah has a reaction similar to

John's in Revelation 1:17, but with a twist. There, John falls like a dead man, while here Isaiah says, "*Woe is me!!*" In the Isaiah passage, and here in verse 8, the term "holy" is repeated three times; again, it is the only term applied to Yahweh in

triplicate. God is not "man" said in a loud voice; he is apart from, distinct from the humans that he created and everything else. No one, nothing compares to God. We worship a God that is majestic, magnificent and *holy, holy, holy!* He is AWESOME and worthy of our deepest devotion and service.

Though that seems like a more than adequate reason to worship him, v. 11 gives us an additional rationale for it. He is worthy because our awesome God created everything! (We'll talk more about that in the sermon this morning).

This brings us back to Jesus. Though God (or the godhead) is totally unapproachable in himself, holy, separate and apart, even from the humans he created, he bridged that gap by sending Jesus, his Son, to the earth in the likeness of a man. John 1:14 says,

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Do you want to know what God is like? Jesus came to spell out "God" in words we understand. Jesus "exegetes"

(interprets) God (John 1:18, 14:8-9). Hebrews 1:3 says it this way:

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Jesus came to dwell among us, to save us, and to show us what our holy Father is like.

In Revelation 4:10, we read that the 24 elders fall down, casting their crowns before him in humble worship. We worship God the Father as Creator, and we know that Jesus was there, in the beginning, creating at the same time.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:1-3.

We cannot worship God properly unless we acknowledge that he is the Creator of the universe and everything in it.

I call this **faith's first fact**. Look at these passages:

"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." *Hebrews 11:3*

When commending Abraham, Paul says,

I have made you the father of many nations—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

And Jesus, who was there, spoke of the creation of man and woman in Matthew 19:4. He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,

If one believes that the world came into existence by chance or if they insist on making time their god, they cannot possibly

worship the God that is spoken in the book of Revelation. This is a foundational fact upon which our worship must be based. When we worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), we are worshipping the only true and living God and the Creator of the all things.

God is an awesome God not just because of his inherent awesomeness but because he created the world and he created you and me. You and I exist because God made us. The story of the victory we have in Jesus begins here, in this chapter with this vision of God's creation worshipping him, "*who IS, who WAS, and is to come.*" We should join them while still on *terra firma* because it won't be long before we'll join them up there, in heaven above.

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