

Revelation 4: The Throne, the Elders and the Seven Lamps

Revelation 4:2–5 | Sunday, February 15 | Revelation Series

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OVERVIEW

Hal picks up at Revelation 4:2, having spent the whole previous session on verse 1. Chapter 4 is what he calls the plot point of the book — where everything begins to change and the scene shifts from earth to heaven. John is in the spirit, enveloped by the Holy Spirit so that he can survive what he is about to see, and the first thing he sees is a throne. Hal works through what John does not do — he never tries to describe the form of God — and what he does instead: jewels standing for character. A jasper, which Hal renders as a diamond, for the flawless righteousness of God's character; a sardius, a ruby, for the blood of Christ that satisfies it; a rainbow like an emerald for the covenant after the flood, and for life. Then the throne changes. Lightning and thunder come out of it, and the seven lampstands that stood on earth in chapter 1 are now burning before it in heaven. The great snatch has happened, and God's ambassadors have been withdrawn.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 4:2–3 — John in the spirit; the throne, the jasper and the sardius, the rainbow like an emerald

Revelation 4:4 — Twenty-four elders in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads

Revelation 4:5 — Lightning and thunder from the throne; seven lamps of fire, which are the seven spirits of God

Revelation 1:20 — The seven lampstands are the seven churches

1 John 5:4–5 — This is the victory that overcame the world, even our faith

Leviticus — The sacrifice system — where Hal begins tracing the number twenty-four

Deuteronomy — The next step in that trail, to the priesthood set up in the temple

KEY TERMS

Plot point — Hal's name for chapter 4 — where everything in the book begins to change and the scene shifts from earth to heaven

Jasper — the stone John names first; Hal renders it as a diamond, for the perfect absolute righteousness of God's character

Sardius — a ruby — set beside the diamond, it stands for the blood of Jesus Christ that satisfies that righteousness

The rainbow — God's sign of his covenant, after the flood, that he would never again destroy all life on the earth with water

Twenty-four — the number associated with priests, from the courses set up in the temple

Harpazo — the Greek behind the Rapture — a word used of pickpocketing, to snatch with stealth; Hal calls it “the great snatch”

The overcomer — the believer, out of 1 John 5:4–5 — and the golden crown is the crown of a victor in the ancient Olympic games

The seven spirits of God — the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer from the message itself. Every answer is in the teaching.

1. Why does Hal call chapter 4 the plot point of the book?

2. What does John mean when he says he was “in the spirit”?

3. Where is John taken from, and what is the first thing he sees?

4. Why does John describe God with jewels rather than describing his form?

5. What do the jasper and the sardius stand for?

6. Where does the rainbow first appear in the Bible, and what does God attach to it?

7. What is the emerald in the centre of the rainbow for?

8. How does Hal get from the number twenty-four to the identity of the elders?

9. What two things convince Hal the twenty-four elders are not angels?

10. Who is the overcomer, and where does Hal get the answer?

11. What does Hal say the glorified Church’s first priestly duty will be?

12. The lampstands stood on earth in chapter 1. What does it mean that they are now burning before the throne in heaven?
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DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Hal says John never tries to describe the form of God, only the impact of his character. Why might that restraint matter for how we think and speak about God?

2. The diamond and the ruby stand side by side — God's flawless righteousness, and the blood that satisfies it. Which of the two do you find harder to believe about yourself?

3. Hal says there is mercy before judgment, and that mercy will always be available to those who turn. Where have you seen God give someone time?

4. He argues that no religious book written by a man would ever say our righteousnesses are filthy rags. Do you find that a strong argument that this book is not sourced in man?

5. Faith, Hal says, is the one thing you can do and still not do anything — because receiving a gift has no merit in it. Where do you still catch yourself trying to earn something from God?

6. The elders are already at work as priests, praying for people going through what is happening below. What does it change to think of heaven as active rather than restful?

MEMORY VERSE

"And there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance."

— Revelation 4:3, as Hal reads it in this message