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## Spiritual Formation Part 26

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### Revelation 4: 6-11

#### “Heaven Exposed to Us!”

What would a glimpse of heaven do to and for you? Here is a picture of a heavenly Choir, of all of creation praising God and His wonder as Almighty, Holy and Worthy. And so begins a foretelling of what will come about. The previous passage from 4:1 through 22:5 describes a series of heavenly visions in seven cycles (see background article) that John receives from Christ, climaxing with the final judgment. The purpose is not just *eschatology* (End Times), but rather to give the persecuted church hope and encouragement, and chastisement to those in leadership who are “bent” on false teaching and bad motives. The goal is that we get our churches lined up to His will and call.

John gives us a picture of worship, as God is exclusive and pure. This is about how we come before God, because He is the Supreme and Sovereign Lord over all. John explains His Throne Room in terms of earthly metaphors of earthly kings, except that an earthly king thinks he is in control and deserves the veneration of his subjects. God alone deserves such praise. An earthly king holds court by force and control, whereas God has earned the right to be in command, and He alone is worthy. He has the right to rule and dictate His decrees over us—over all, because He is the One who created everything. There is no one greater; He deserves our wholehearted worship and reverence. This does not include only praise and song; it means putting Him first in all that we do in life. Real worship is how we reverence Him, not how we sing about Him. He wants our obedience and veneration over all else (1 Sam. 15:22-23; Rev. 5:8; 11:19; 15:5-8)

Revelation is not just about what will happen in the future, but also what is happening now with the practice of our faith and how we lead our church. We are called to open our eyes to His wonder and worship Him solely—not our ways and trends, and not our pride and feelings. Revelation is about His church and that we run it His way, worshipping Him alone. Church and worship are not about what we feel we need or desire; rather, it is about Christ and what He intends.

- *Sea of glass*. This is an image of worship, as the temple had the “Bronze Sea” referring to the “basin” in the heavenly temple (Rev. 15:5-6, 8; 16:1, 17). Elsewhere, this image of water and worship is found when the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds) was parted by God, as was the Jordan River’s parting (which was actually a greater miracle). These images indicate that all that exists is submissive to God’s supremacy, and He has victory over all that oppose Him. In conjunction, water also means that He supplies us with all we need (Ex. 24:10; Deut. 11:11; 1 Kings 7:23-25; 2 Kings 16:17; 2 Chron. 4:2-6, 15, 39; Psalm 11:4; Isa. 51:9-11; Jer 27:19; Ezek. 1:22; Rev. 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:2).

- *Crystal* indicates the magnificence, precious purity, and beauty of His Throne and Being as with verse three (Rev. 21:18-21).
- *Four living creatures*. A figurative image from Ezekiel and Babylon descriptions, this possibly refers to angelic ministers to God who act as protectors, guardians, and servants, giving their adoration. The point is that “God is Great;” God is universally glorious, and greater than any earthly power or king. This may also be an assault on the powers and authority of Babylon and Rome. To read into these images more than what is there misses the point of the passage and muddies the waters of Revelation (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:17-22; 1 Kings 7:29; 1 Chron. 12:8; 28:18; Psalm 18:10; Isa. 6; Ezek. Chaps 1, 10).
- *Covered with eyes*. Not necessarily a literal depiction, this perhaps means that nothing gets past them; they are all seeing.
- *Like a lion... like an ox... like a man... like a flying eagle*. Basically, these images mean the entire scope and sinful nature of all creation. *Lion* is the greatest of beasts, the *ox* is the greatest domestic beast and servant to man, the *eagle* is the chief of birds, and *man* is the chief of all (Isa. 6:3-5).
- *Holy, holy, holy*, is from Isaiah 6:3, and is an expansion of God’s divine name, power, and holiness found in Exodus. This is referring to the holiness of God and our duty and call to worship Him and Him only (Ex. 3:14-15; Isa. 41:4; Rev. 1:4).

John tells us in his Gospel that “He must increase and we must decrease.” (John 3:29-30) If we refuse this vital call, God just may allow those hardships to come our way, breaking us down so we will yield and grow as His child. Just as good and loving parents will discipline their child, God will discipline us. But, this is not a personal attack; rather, it is a way to help us grow and be better used by our Lord (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 1:5).

This passage is about coming before our Lord, and our worship from our gratitude for who He is and what He has done for us as individuals. He is the depiction of the centrality of His Supremacy as Christ. Christ is the Priest, Head, Lord, and Prime Shepherd of the Church. He is the object and reason why we meet and function. Christ is the destiny and pattern we follow and emulate.

- *Fall down before him*. Anyone who comes before God falls “prostrate.” This is a form of reverence and homage.
- *Worship him*. An essential element is that all who proclaim God as Lord must also worship Him. Here, it refers to songs of praise for who He is in glory and what He has done in deeds (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; John 20:28; Rev. 1:6).
- *Lay their crowns...you are worthy* means the recognition that God alone is worthy of our praise and worship.

- *You created* acknowledges God as the creator of all things and Sovereign Lord over all. He made it and He gets to run it and all that is in the universe, including you and me!

Looking forward to His eternity? Great! But, consider this. We do not need to be in His Throne Room; He is here with us now. We just need to see His hand upon us now, feel His presence, and allow His supremacy to lead us in His way. In the end, God wins out. Satan's spiritual warfare against us is as futile as our war against God. He wins! There is no other way; His way is the best and most glorious for us and for Him. Satan wants our eyes distracted so we do not see Christ's majesty, with the goal being that we worship him and not Him. God wants us in spiritual purity and faithfulness in and to Him. The choice is given, the call is made; the choosing is up to us! How will we lead and manage our spiritual journeys? How will you lead and manage your church? Will it be His supremacy or your inclinations? Which way do you think will win out? Then, why would a person of faith in Christ choose to run his or her life or church by any way other than His?

### **Questions**

1. What would a glimpse of heaven do to and for you? How would this glimpse of heaven motivate you and your Church to get right and get busy in Him?
2. Why does the Church exist? What about your church? Why is this so often forgotten in our boardrooms and planning? How does this passage give hope and encouragement to the persecuted church?
3. How does this passage give chastisement to those in leadership who are "bent" on false teaching or bad motives?
4. How would you describe or define worship? What do worship, reverence, and praise mean to you and your church? What should they mean?
5. Why does God alone deserve our wholehearted worship, reverence, and praise? How has God earned the right to be worthy? Why does God have the right to rule and dictate His degrees over us and over all? How will this affect your spiritual formation?
6. What does the centrality of God's Supremacy mean to you? How would you handle it if God were preparing to give a command to you?
7. What does it mean in the practice of your faith that Christ is the Priest, Head, Lord, and Prime Shepherd of the Church? How do you exhibit, in your daily faith, that He is the Object and Reason why we meet and function as a church?
8. How do some churches battle God for control of His church for their pleasures? How will you lead and manage your spiritual journey? How will you lead and

manage your church so you are not battling Him, but rather, serving Him?

9. Any church, no matter how good it has been in the past, could easily fail. How does the breakdown of putting our best efforts forward contribute to this? What about that when we stop growing, stop learning, and stop reaching out to Him and to others, our churches fail? What can your church do to prevent this?
10. How is God exclusive and pure? How are we to come before God? What can your church do to better reverence God, not just in song, but also in motivations and behaviors?