

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 9, Revelation 4 Continued

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Alright, let's jump right in. Today, we're doing a deep dive into Revelation chapters 4 and 5. And, you know, I think this is going to be really interesting because we were talking earlier about how these chapters present this incredible picture of God's power and sovereignty in heaven, but they were written for a community, a group of early Christians who were going through some really, really tough times, like intense persecution under Roman rule. Yeah, I think you hit the nail on the head there.

I mean, right from the start, you've got this tension between this kind of glorious heavenly reality and then the very real earthly struggles that the original audience would have been experiencing. Yeah, it's like this amazing paradox: divine power on full display, but the people who are supposed to be reading this, they're going through some of the hardest things imaginable. Yeah, absolutely.

So, okay, let's like transport ourselves into the scene here. The throne room, Revelation chapter 4, like think Ezekiel, Isaiah, but, you know, amped up to 11. A throne room like nothing you've ever seen, just filled with all these mysterious figures: 24 elders, four living creatures.

It's easy to get kind of lost in the details there and try to figure out, like, who these beings are exactly. But I think what's more important is what they're doing, which is constantly praising God, acknowledging God's power as the creator and ruler of everything. It's like this cosmic chorus, just always affirming God's ultimate authority.

And one thing I found really interesting is that the expert in this lecture pointed out that the number four often symbolizes the entire earth. So these creatures could actually represent all of creation giving praise to God. That's a good point.

Right. Like, can you imagine a world where everyone everywhere recognizes God's power? That's the picture we're getting here. Absolutely.

And that contrast becomes even more powerful when you consider the historical context. You know, Revelation 4, this vision of the throne room, it might be deliberately contrasting. The divine throne room with what Roman imperial court scenes would look like.

We know from the historian Suetonius that Emperor Domitian, the Roman emperor in power during John's time, had 24 lictors, who were basically bodyguards and priests who wore golden crowns. Okay. During ceremonies.

Do you think that John was like intentionally trying to subvert the Roman narrative by using these parallels with the 24 elders? Yeah. I think that's definitely a possibility worth considering. Yeah.

The emperor's got his earthly power, but God's authority is on a whole other level. Absolutely. I mean, it's a question worth thinking about for sure, but maybe we could shift our focus to another element that I thought was really interesting.

Okay. This sea of glass before the throne. Oh, yeah.

The sea of glass. I mean, that imagery is so rich and evocative. I mean, it reminds me of the basin in Solomon's temple and Ezekiel's vision of this sparkling expanse.

Right. But it's a little unexpected, right? I mean, a sea in a throne room. Yeah.

It's striking, that's for sure. And I think that's where it gets really interesting. You see, later on in Revelation, the sea often represents chaos and evil.

Okay. In fact, there's a beast that comes out of the sea later on. Right.

Right. But here in chapter four, it's totally calm and subdued. Like it's been tamed.

So it's not just any sea. It's a sea that's completely under God's control. Yeah.

And I think that tells us something really important about God's power. So do you think that this tranquil sea is foreshadowing something bigger? I think you're right on track there, actually. I think it foreshadows the ultimate removal of evil in the new creation.

Oh, wow. You know, in Revelation 21.1, it says the sea was no more. Wow.

So even the very symbol of chaos and evil is completely erased. So even though we might be surrounded by chaos and suffering in our lives, this vision reminds us that God's power is ultimate. Really? He has the power to bring peace and to ultimately wipe out evil for good.

Yeah, it's a powerful image for sure. It really is. But let's see how the story unfolds.

Okay. So we've got this amazing throne room. God's power is on full display.

Right. But then in Revelation 5, things take a dramatic turn. Okay.

With the appearance of a sealed scroll in God's right hand. All right. So what's the deal with this scroll? I mean, it's obviously not just any old document.

No, you got it. This scroll represents God's plan. Okay.

His plan for establishing his kingdom on earth. Okay. And that involves both judgment and salvation.

Okay. And remember, it's not just about reading the scroll. Right.

It's about putting that plan into action. Right. So then comes this, like, frantic search for someone worthy to open it.

Exactly. John looks all over heaven and earth, even under the earth. Yeah, he's scouring the universe.

It's like a cosmic search. Yeah. And he can't find anyone.

And the fact that he finds no one worthy. Yeah. Not even in heaven.

That's a huge deal. Right. I mean, that really highlights how much we need someone with the authority and the power to actually carry out God's plan.

And remember, John weeps when he can't find anyone. Right. This isn't just, oh, bummer, I couldn't find anyone.

Right. It's a feeling of deep despair. It represents the potential crushing of humanity's hope for salvation and justice.

Yeah. That's a pretty intense moment. It is.

Like the tension is really building here. Yeah. Who could possibly be worthy of this? Well, that's where we'll pick up in part two of this deep dive.

Ooh, okay. A cliffhanger. Yeah.

All right. So stay tuned. All right.

All right. So we left off with John in total despair. No.

He just searched the whole universe for someone worthy to open the scroll. Right. No luck.

I mean, I'm on the edge of my seat here. What happens next? Well, just when all hope seems lost, one of the 24 elders steps in and says, "Don't weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed.

He's able to open the scroll, and it's seven seals. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David. Those names sound pretty loaded.

What's the significance there? Yeah, you're right. Those aren't just any random titles. Those are names that point to Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Okay. The one who was prophesied to come and save his people. So they're meant to evoke this image of a powerful, conquering king.

Right. Like a lion. Exactly.

But here's where things get really interesting. Okay. John turns around expecting to see this fierce, majestic lion ready to roar and take charge.

Right. But that's not what he sees at all. Wait, so John expected a lion, and he got a lamb.

That's right. Yeah. Instead of a lion, John sees a lamb, a lamb that looks as if it had been slain.

Whoa. Okay. I'm definitely not picturing Simba here.

Yeah. So we've got a lion that's a lamb, and not just any lamb, a lamb that's been slain. What's going on here? What's John trying to tell us with this bizarre image? Well, that's the brilliance of it.

It's this deliberate contrast, this paradox that gets right to the heart of the Christian faith. Oh, okay. The lamb probably represents both the Passover lamb from the Exodus story, where God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, and also the suffering servant described in Isaiah 53.

I see. So the slain lamb is actually Jesus, and he's the only one worthy to open the scroll because of his sacrificial death and resurrection. It's like John is saying that true power doesn't come from force or domination, but from humility, love, and ultimately sacrifice.

Yeah. It flips the script on how we usually think about power and victory. Jesus conquers not by brute force, but through love, humility, and self-sacrifice.

Okay. It's a completely different kind of power, a power that's rooted in giving yourself up for others. And this isn't just some abstract theological concept, right? What does this vision of conquering through sacrifice mean for us today? That's a great question.

Yeah. How does this challenge the way we think about power and victory in our own lives? Well, I think it's a question worth pondering. We tend to think of strength as pushing your way to the top, getting ahead no matter the cost.

But what if true strength actually lies in serving others? Okay. In choosing love over power, even when it costs us something. Yeah.

That's a pretty radical idea in a world that's often obsessed with power and dominance. It is. Okay.

So back to the scroll. The Lamb approaches the throne and takes the scroll from God's hand. Right.

It's a simple act, but it's loaded with meaning. Right. Absolutely.

Remember how John searched high and low and couldn't find anyone worthy to even touch the scroll? Right. And now here's this lamb, this seemingly weak and vulnerable creature, boldly approaching God and taking the scroll. What does that tell us? It seems like Joe's making a pretty bold statement here.

It's like he's saying that this lamb, this slain and resurrected Christ, is actually divine. Exactly. This isn't just some symbolic gesture.

It's an act of authority. Okay. The way John describes this moment really emphasizes its importance.

It's like the Lamb is claiming his rightful place and authority, the authority to enact God's plan. So it's a moment of both awe and anticipation. It is.

We're left wondering: what will the Lamb do next as he begins to open the seals and set God's plan in motion? Yeah. That's the big question. All right.

So we've covered a lot of ground. The throne room vision, the mysterious scroll, the desperate search for someone worthy, and then that incredible reveal of the Lamb. It's like this whirlwind of imagery and symbolism.

For sure. But before we dive into what happens next, do you have any final thoughts on what we've covered so far? Well, I think... So the Lamb has the scroll. He's ready to set God's plan in motion.

What happens next? Well, as soon as the Lamb takes the scroll, the whole of heaven erupts in this massive celebration. Oh, wow. The four living creatures and the 24 elders fall down before him in worship.

So they're not just sitting back politely applauding. This is full-on worship. Oh, yeah.

This is the real deal. What does that look like exactly? Well, each of the elders is holding a golden bowl full of incense, which represents the prayers of God's people. So it's not just these heavenly beings worshiping.

It's like the prayers of all God's people are being lifted up to the Lamb as well. Exactly. It's this beautiful picture of heaven and earth united in worship.

That's powerful. And then they break into a new song praising the Lamb for being slain and using his blood to purchase people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation. So they're celebrating the Lamb's victory, a victory won not through force, but through sacrifice.

Right. And that victory has implications for everyone everywhere. It's not just about individual salvation.

Oh, it's much bigger than that. It's about creating a new kind of people, a kingdom of priests who will rule and reign on the earth. You get it.

This song really highlights the global scope of God's plan and the absolutely central role the Lamb plays in it all. Okay, so the chorus doesn't stop there, right? No, it gets even bigger. Thousands upon thousands of angels join in.

Wow. Singing praises to the Lamb who was slain, but is now worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise. It's like this crescendo of praise just building and building as more and more voices are added to the chorus.

And it culminates with every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea. Wow. Joining in this cosmic anthem of praise to both God on the throne and to the Lamb.

It's hard to even imagine the sound of every creature in existence singing praises to the Lamb. It's a pretty mind-blowing image. It really is.

It gives you this overwhelming sense of unity, of complete adoration, all directed towards the Lamb who conquered through sacrifice. It drives home the point that this lamb, this slain and resurrected Christ, isn't just some peripheral figure. He's the very center of everything.

The one through whom God's plan is being worked out from beginning to end. So we've journeyed through these two incredibly rich chapters of Revelation. What are some of the key takeaways you want to leave our listener with? We've seen this stark contrast between the realities of heaven and earth.

Heaven is filled with this radiant vision of God's power and glory, while earth is still grappling with suffering and injustice. Yeah, it's a tough reality. But we've also seen a subversive challenge to the powers that be.

A reminder that ultimately God's authority trumps any earthly power. Right. Like, no matter how bad things get, God is still in control.

Exactly. And of course, we've witnessed this paradoxical victory of the Lamb. Victory won not through force or dominance, but through humility, sacrifice, and love.

And that's a really challenging message for us today. Especially in a world that so often tells us to fight our way to the top. So how can we live this out in our own lives? How can we join in with heaven in worshiping the Lamb who is worthy? How can we embody his way of conquering? Those are the questions we should all be wrestling with.

Absolutely. And here's a final thought to ponder. What if true victory in our lives isn't about getting ahead or being in control, but about choosing love over power, even when it costs us something? What if the way of the lamb, the way of sacrifice and love, is actually the path to true freedom and lasting change? That's a powerful thought to end on.

Thanks for taking this deep dive with us. Until next time, keep exploring, keep questioning, and keep seeking truth.