

LIVE BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT

This was the first of a series of sermons by Collin Phelps with particular reference to Revelation chapters 4.

INTRODUCTION

We are all unique individuals. Although we have many similarities we differ somewhat. This discussion is referring to the differences in our concerns, worries etc. As individuals what makes us anxious. How do our anxieties differ? In the world today we see so many happenings and situations to be anxious about, such as death, poverty, suffering and illness. However, part of the problem causing the anxiety is a poor understanding of reality. As we live our lives, our five primary senses take everything in and our mind forms a conclusion and we respond.

For this discussion we have three distinctions of anxiety we will consider:

1. World/global anxiety – financial meltdown, global wars, disease, poverty
2. South Africa/community anxiety – schooling, jobs, politics
3. Personal anxiety – illness, relationships, work

This discussion will attempt to encourage us as believers to “live by faith and not by sight”. Revelation chapter 4 provides us with a perspective of reality from God’s view.

OUTLINE OF JOHN’S SITUATION

We can notice from the text the use of words such as “like” and “had an appearance of” as John attempts to describe what he sees and experiences. These descriptions are by no way absolute yet we are given a basic image and understanding of the magnificence witnessed by John in this chapter. It is evident that John is reaching out for words to try and describe the majesty of the experience as he experiences reality through God’s eyes:

1. The reference to the “open door” (Ver 1) is significant to John’s experience. He is not taken away to a far off and mystical place, he is here on this world looking through and open door and witnessing reality now.

2. John then describes his instructions to “Come up here” (Ver 1) and then “At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, and one seated on the throne” (Ver2). The throne is central to John’s experience, it is central to reality. The throne may be regarded as the “control centre” for helping to understand the importance of the placement and significance of the throne. The throne is central to our world, everything that happens in our world is initiated from the “control room”, the throne. John goes on to mention that someone is seated on the throne. This is important for us to realise that God is always occupying his throne. He is never absent or handing responsibility over to someone else, he is in the “control room”, firmly in control. God is here in reality, God is here and now.

3. In verse 3 John attempts to describe the appearance of “he who sat there...”. John attempts to describe the indescribable. This is why he refers to precious stones as he attempts to portray the beauty and excellence of the God.

4. Many symbols have been referred to within the chapter (Ver 3-6):

- Rainbow – this is a covenant of Grace. There is a limit to the punishment God will inflict as he is a God of grace.
- Lightening/thunder – this is a sign of God’s judgement, his wrath. God does not allow sin to go unpunished.

- Seven (7) – this number is regarded as the biblical number for completeness.
- Glass - the specific symbol of glass is difficult to fully understand. However the reference to sea is more understandable. Seas are often violent, unpredictable and out of control. However, John describes a sea of calm. This is an indication of control over the uncontrollable. Calm in the place of violence. The world is a messy place, full of sin, but God's reality is calm.
- Four creatures (Ver 8) – represent the four ends of the earth and it is important to note that they are always worshipping. Holy, holy, holy...
- Twenty-four elders – represent the people of God.

CONCLUSION

Things are not as they seem. Although it may appear that things around us are out of control, that assumption is incorrect. God is firmly placed on His throne. God is here and now. God judges where it is needed and he extends a covenant of grace. We need to recognise God and His throne, that he is firmly in control, we need to see things how they truly are and bow down and worship.

Next time we are anxious about this world and/or our personal life, we need to remember the picture of God's throne. God is in His seat, sitting in the "control room". We ourselves may never get to see the throne for ourselves, but this is what faith is. 2 Corinthians 5:7 "for we walk by faith, not by sight": If we do as instructed in this verse, we will see things through Jesus' eyes and acknowledge and accept it as our own reality.

Philippians 4:4-6: the next time we are anxious we must return to the throne and remind ourselves that God is firmly in control.

Philippians 4:7: "guard", this is a reminder that God will guard us from anxiety.

Anxiety prevents us from being a testimony to the world. We need to return to the throne constantly and God will give us the peace. We need to remind ourselves there is a throne here and now and God is occupying that throne.