

Revelation Ch4-5 - God's In Charge

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Well, we're going to be looking at chapters 4 and 5, so we're going to read almost all of it.

Let's hear God's word together. John writes,

[5 : 56] Well, let's keep our Bible open there.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that you have given us your word written down for us today so that we might see your greatness and your glory.

That we might see the living almighty God. And that is what we want to do today. We want to see you with our minds.

We want to know you in our hearts. We want our lives to be changed. We don't want to be the same. We want to be different.

[7 : 23] We want to be more like the Lord Jesus. We want our church to be the way you've called us to be. We want to be the same.

We want our church to be the same. We want to be the same. We want to be the same. We want to be the same. We want to walk on in our faith with confidence and assurance. We don't want to settle for anything less than living for you.

so would you by your spirit make all what we have just prayed a reality in each of our lives today we ask this in Jesus name for his glory Amen so when you look out in the world you turn on the television and listen to the news or read your social media who do you think is in charge I bet most of you are thinking well that's easy God God's in charge and of course we'd be right wouldn't we but do we really believe it do we live as if God is in complete control over all things and all people you see we look at the world and we see tragic accidents we see pandemics and wars we experience the cost of living crisis and shortages of energy we watch as world leaders threaten nuclear missiles and invade countries at will and rather than control we see what is more like chaos destruction and instead of sitting in peace we are running around in panic we fear and we worry that God has lost the reins of power and that the forces of evil are encroaching and are taking over it's how the church felt as John wrote down his vision of revelation the might of Rome and the power of the emperor were squeezing and crushing the church for a believer at that time to stand up and speak out would certainly leave you isolated and without a job and to claim that well

Jesus Christ was Lord well that would get you killed things were not getting easier they were getting a whole lot worse who's in charge round here is God in control of course the same pressures are felt today the subtle voices that remind us that Christianity is completely irrelevant and outdated and done for it's over the constant silencing of the church and the objection to God's word we feel squeezed and crushed and in our private moments when we're on our own we're questioning is God is God really in charge well let's look and see what John sees have a look at chapter 4 verse 1 after this he says so this is after his first vision back in chapter 1 so after this

I looked and there before me was a door standing open in heaven we can picture John there as this in his mind he sees this this door open and well we're invited with John to step into heaven itself look at the rest of verse 1 and the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet that loud blaring blast of a voice come up here and I will show you what must take place after this from our new vantage point in heaven we are going to see history in the world from God's perspective we literally move from the chaos that we are in on earth into the calm of heaven through this vision we are entering God's control room now we must keep our eyes wide open because as we enter through the door there's lots of things to see we're not going to be able to stop and look at them all but we're going to see the main things and the message is clear don't panic

[12 : 32] God rules his world don't fear God controls your destiny and don't worry God is being worshipped so don't panic God rules his world three things we see that tell us this first we see a throne verse 2 at once I was in the spirit and there before me was a throne in heaven well we know what thrones are for they're for kings and rulers people who have power and authority so we are entering into the place of sovereign rule in fact John doesn't want us to forget so everywhere we look we see this throne when John describes something it's always in relation to the throne follow with me as we look at this chapter 4 verse 5 from the throne came flashes of lightning in front of the throne were seven lamps blazing verse 6 in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass in the centre round the throne were four living creatures chapter 5 verse 1 then I saw on the right hand of him who sat on the throne verse 11 then I looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands they encircled the throne can you see the throne don't forget the throne

John is telling us there's not chaos and anarchy this is the place of power and authority well a throne may symbolise rule but it's not much good unless somebody is sitting on it is it an empty throne is no good to anyone we need someone to rule so the second thing we see is God verse 2 at once I was in the spirit and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it this is God's throne for God is the supreme ruler over all things and all people look at his description can you see his beauty verse 3 and the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby these crystals these jewels of brown and red and not only that but there was shining this rainbow that shone like an emerald which encircled the throne so it's not just kind of our normal rainbow it's a rain circle if you like multitude of colours glistening bright and dazzling to reflect and display

God's majesty his beauty but not only that can you see his power verse 5 from the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder and in front of the throne seven lamps were blazing you've been in a storm where you've seen the lightning crack the sky lightning up and the house almost shakes well multiply this by by ripples and peals of thunder and fire this is earth shattering power and it's terrifying but then we can also see his calm look at verse 6 also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass clear as crystal we think of the sea and we think of waves crashing into the rocks but here the sea is like glass completely smooth absolute peace and stillness utter calm as we look at

God on the throne we are at once together in unison blinded and attracted by his staggering beauty we are shaking in fear at his awesome power and we are overwhelmed by his calming presence this is our God who sits on the throne ruling and reigning over all things and all people no one and nothing can compare to his magnificence and greatness God can't be contained to something manageable and controlled God is bigger and awesome as we try to grasp his beauty his power and his calm this is our God we see a throne we see God and we see worship as we look at

God on the throne we also see other people who were there and creatures and they're all surrounding the throne picture the throne in the middle and on the outer circle look at verse 4 surrounding the throne were 24 other thrones and seated on each throne were 24 elders now these elders most likely represent all God's people from all time so 24 12 patriarchs representing the old covenant believers 12 apostles representing the new covenant believers 24 in total this is all of God's people from all time and all places all gathering around and then we move closer to the inner circle look at the middle of verse 6 in the center round the throne were four living creatures and they were covered with eyes in front and behind they're looking at everything they see everything they know everything verse 7 the first living creature was like a lion the second was like an ox the third had a face like a man the fourth was like a flying eagle these strange creatures represent the whole of creation think of the lion who rules the wild animals or the ox who is the strongest of the domesticated animals man who is over all humanity the eagle who soars over the skies and the mountains each creature is a picture of power and rule in their own little domain and realm but let's not get caught up with who they are but what they are all doing can you see what these elders and creatures are doing they're all facing and focused on

[20 : 33] God who sits on the throne they're not dwelling on their particular position or power they're worshipping the one who rules over all and they burst into song verse 8 holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty who is and who is and who is to come and whenever the living creatures give glory honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne who lives forever and ever well there's a ripple effect that goes out to the outer circle verse 10 the 24 elders when they hear it well they fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever and they lay their crowns before the throne and they say you are worthy our Lord and God to receive the glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being you see

God is at the center of the universe not me not you not any earthly power of course leaders and influencers live as if they were seated on the throne we sometimes think we're sitting on the throne and act as if we are in charge but here we are invited to step through heaven's door and we see the world in history from God's perspective we see God on his throne no rivals no questions no doubts there is only one ruler the Lord God almighty who was and who is and who is to come never was there a time when he did not rule and never will there be a time when he is not ruling kings and emperors come and go and they all die

Putin and Biden and Martin they will all come to an end governments and councils the UN and the G7 they'll all come crashing down but God lives forever and forever so carry a line Baptist church when you feel the world is against you when you feel the church is under threat and you feel isolated and alone as a Christian and you're wondering are the powers of evil greater and better don't panic God rules the world second don't fear God controls your destiny again as we walk around heaven's control room we see three things first we see a scroll chapter 5 verse 1 then

I saw on the right hand of him who sat on the throne so God is seated on the throne and he's holding in his right hand a scroll with writing on both sides and it's sealed it's closed up it's locked with seven seals what's this scroll what's written on it what's the secret why is it hidden well look back to chapter 4 verse 1 where John was invited to come up here and I will show you what must take place after this you see God is continuing to unveil and to reveal to John all that must take place in other words what is written on the scroll is what is to take place God's purposes and God's plans for history in the world all from the resurrection of

Jesus to the return of Jesus our future destiny the history of the world where we're heading what's going to happen is all wrapped up and sealed in this scroll and notice chapter 5 verse 1 this scroll has writing on both sides there's no room there's no gaps you can't add anything more to it it's complete you see the world and our future is not unfolding by chance there's no random event it's all according to God's design and order it has been written down our future destiny is in God's hands but we've got a problem haven't we did you see what the problem was no one can open this scroll there's nobody that can be found who can carry out

[26 : 06] God's plans and purposes verse 4 so I wept and wept because no one found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside you see God's purposes and God's plans are great but unless they're put into action unless they become a reality well we're done for the world and our future destiny is lost forever there will be no end to the suffering and the struggle darkness and death will reign forever and ever Satan and evil will win the day no wonder John is weeping the scroll containing our future destiny is of no use it's useless unless somebody can come and open it and carry out God's purposes for the world what's going to happen is there anybody who can do it are you going to stand up and say

I'll carry out God's purposes well we just need to look back over the history of the world from the very beginning where God put Adam and Eve in the garden and said Adam and Eve I want you to rule the world on my behalf I want you to be like a king and queen to live out my purposes to do as I please so that my reign will fill the earth they failed miserably and in our attempts all we've done is created more chaos and destruction and disaster there is not one person who is able to fulfill and live out God's purposes and plans but there is one because we see not just the scroll but we see Jesus verse 5 then one of the elders said to me do not weep stop your crying see the line of the tribe of Judah the root of David is triumphed he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals this is

Jesus God's promised king he is able to open it he is the one who is able to carry out God's plans and purposes why because verse 5 he has triumphed he has triumphed over sin and Satan he has conquered darkness and death he is God's victorious champion and how did he do it well let's read on verse 6 then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain I mean what's going on here our minds are a boggle just a moment ago we were looking at the lion the roaring lion now he's a slain lamb beaten up rather than power we see a picture of weakness instead of victory there's defeat but look where this lamb is then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain standing at the centre of the throne you see

God's victory comes through suffering it is through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross that the powers of darkness were destroyed it was through the sufferings of Jesus that the rule of sin was defeated as Jesus died on the cross it seemed all was lost it was as if hell was cheering in celebration but it is through the cross that Jesus reigns and has victory over all things and all people so can you look now and see where the lamb is and what he looks like it looks as if he had been slain but now middle of verse 6 the lamb had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God set into all the earth what's all these sevens about well the seven horns his perfect power the seven eyes his complete knowledge the seven spirits his eternal presence

Jesus Christ is the all conquering victorious champion he is power over all things he knows all things he is present in all things he is the one who will carry out God's purposes and plans Jesus Jesus can open the scroll and unfold our future destiny because he has triumphed we see a scroll we see Jesus and we see worship once again the throne of God from where Jesus reigns is the focus of our attention it's pulling us in like a magnet the song of praise that revolves round and round it reminds us of all that Jesus has done verse eight and when Jesus had taken it the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the lamb verse nine and they sang a new song saying you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for

[32 : 07] God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation and you made them to be a kingdom and priest to serve our God and they will reign on the earth this is what Jesus has done he died for us he's purchased you he's bought you with his own life so that we might become his kingdom people ruling with him and for him on earth forever and forever so Carragoline Baptist Church don't fear your future destiny is secure God has rescued you so that you might rule for him on earth yes suffering will come our way yes we may feel squeezed and crushed we'll face opposition and persecution

Satan may stand against his church but through the death of Jesus our victory is secured death has been defeated and destroyed we are on the winning side so don't fear God controls your destiny so don't panic don't fear and don't worry because God is being worshipped again let's see what we see I hope it's clear at this stage that we can see the worship we can't miss it can we wherever we look in heaven's control room there's spontaneous worship as we see

Jesus who is God seated on his throne as we see his rule over all things and his control over our destiny so heaven responds in worship can can can you see it taking place can you even hear the song in the center God is reigning through Jesus and in response all around in these circles going out and out and out we have the four living creatures all of creation around the throne and beyond that we have the twenty four elders representing all God's people from all time and if that were not enough look at verse 11 then I looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands ten thousand times ten thousand they encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders and in a never expanding circle verse 12 in a loud voice they were praying worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise

I don't see any panic here do you I don't see any fear and I don't see any worry just worship joy and delight in all that God has achieved through his son you see when we see God for who he is when we capture that vision we do not need to worry he rules all things he controls all things and that includes every detail of your life because it's all been written down whatever happens God is in charge not only do we see the worship but we're to join the worship this isn't just a spectacle for our entertainment but it demands our participation one of the things

I love to do is to go to a big sports match especially the big ones to take your seat in that stadium and to watch your team and there as you look down on the pitch everything unfolds before your eyes the longing the hoping the urging your team to win the final whistle blows and the crowd in one voice join in the celebration victory has been won but that's what we have here a sense that I want us to capture that we have been invited today to take our place in the stadium of the world and the universe worship of God we sit and we watch because it's him who does it all as history and the world unfolds before us it's bloody and it's hard there's suffering and there's struggling there's pain and there's death but the outcome is never in doubt we watch as God rules the world with power and authority we watch as our future destiny is secured and we worship we celebrate the victory we join in the praise of heaven verse 13 and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever and the living creature said amen and they fell down and worshipped you see as we join in we begin to get a glimpse of life and history from God's perspective we're lifted from the chaos of this earth to the calm of heaven we stop looking at self and our own little worries and concerns and we look at God we see his glory and his greatness and we remind ourselves of his sovereign rule and the panic and the fears and the worries become less and less we join in the worship and we bow in worship there's lots of singing going on and we love to sing and we're going to sing in a minute but you know what standing up to sing or sitting to sing ain't going to change anything you see when we worship it's about the heart and our hearts need to be right mouthing out words and following a tune that won't transform you or me do you see how those in heaven worshipped go back to chapter 4 verse 4 we see the elders on their thrones end of verse 4 they were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads but what do they do end of verse 9 they lay their crowns down before the throne chapter 5 verse 8 the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb verse 14 they fall down and worship do you see what's happening they see

[40 : 29] God and they fall down they are taken in by his beauty and his awesome power and his calm his peace and they take off their crowns and they bow in submission to God their action is an attitude of their heart you see for you and I there is only one response to this almighty great God and that is we submit to him to acknowledge that he alone is at the centre of the universe that God alone has power over all things knows all things and is present all things and as we worship and as we sing we are laying down any claim to God's throne and we submit our life to him he created the world and he has the right to do whatever he desires in the world he created me and he created you and he has the right to use me and you in whichever way he pleases he is and I do not understand his ways but you know what that's okay because God's in charge and I'm not

God he is so don't panic God rules the world don't fear God controls your destiny and don't worry God is forever being worshipped let's pray as the rain falls on the roof it just reminds us that we have no power to make it rain no power to make it stop but God alone is in control how awesome how amazing you are we bow before you we submit to you and say

Lord this is my life here take it and use it as you please for your glory for my good help me not to panic help me not to fear or to worry but be filled with the vision of our great God Amen well I think we need to sing don't we it would be hard not to so we're going to sing bye love so can't was sure Huh