

**Handout 8: Revelation, Chapter 4 (Talk 8)**  
**David Crabtree, Reformation Fellowship, August 15, 2021**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Where we are in the book of Revelation
  - 1. We were in the holy place; the heavenly high priest was performing his duties on the Day of Atonement.
  - 2. This was followed by a series of letters to the churches of Asia Minor.
    - a) Jesus' assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in the face of imminent persecution
  - 3. Now we will step into the holy of holies and see God the Father on his throne.
- B. Some comments on the nature of throne room scenes
  - 1. There are about a half dozen throne room scenes in the Bible.
    - a) All are part of prophetic visions.
- C. Revelation 4 is the last of the throne room scenes.
  - 1. It borrows from the visions in Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.
    - a) It appears to be a further development of those visions.
    - b) Borrows themes and images
  - 2. We already looked at Daniel 7.
    - a) It is the most similar to this scene in Revelation.
- D. We will look briefly at those other visions as a point of comparison.
  - 1. I will read each scene and then highlight the elements that have counterparts in the scene in Revelation 4.

**II. The commissioning of Isaiah as prophet to his people (Isaiah 6:1-13)**

*Is. 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
The whole earth is full of his glory."*

*Is. 6:4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

*Is. 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."*

*Is. 6:6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."*

Is. 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "**Here am I. Send me!**"

Is. 6:9 He said, "Go and tell this people:  
" 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding;  
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'

Is. 6:10 Make the heart of this people calloused;  
make their ears dull  
and close their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed."

Is. 6:11 Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?"

And he answered:

"Until the cities lie ruined  
and without inhabitant,  
until the houses are left deserted  
and the fields ruined and ravaged,  
Is. 6:12 until the LORD has sent everyone far away  
and the land is utterly forsaken.  
Is. 6:13 And though a tenth remains in the land,  
it will again be laid waste.  
But as the terebinth and oak  
leave stumps when they are cut down,  
so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."

#### A. Noteworthy features

1. God is seated on his throne.
2. He is in the temple.
3. The voices of the seraphim singing shake the whole temple.
4. The seraphim have multiple wings.
  - a) Seraphim and cherubim appear to be the same thing.
5. In the presence of God, Isaiah feels humbled and unclean.
6. Isaiah volunteers to take God's message to his people

### III. The divine call of Ezekiel as prophet (Ezekiel 1:1-3:13)

Ezek. 1:1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, **the heavens were opened** and I saw visions of God.

Ezek. 1:2 On the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin— 3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was upon him.

Ezek. 1:4 I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—**an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light**. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, 5 and in the fire was what looked like **four living creatures**. In appearance their form was that of **a man**, 6 **but each of them had four faces and four wings**. 7 Their legs were straight; **their feet** were like those of a calf and gleamed **like burnished bronze**. 8 Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, 9 and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved.

Ezek. 1:10 Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had **the face of a man**, and on the right side each had **the face of a lion**, and on the left **the face of an ox**; each also had **the face of an eagle**. 11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, one touching the wing of another creature on either side, and two wings covering its body. 12 Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. 13 The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. **Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it.** 14 The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning.

Ezek. 1:22 **Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome.** 23 Under the expanse their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. 24 When the creatures moved, **I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army.** When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

Ezek. 1:25 Then there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. 26 Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like **a throne of sapphire**, and high above **on the throne was a figure like that of a man**. 27 I saw that from what appeared to be **his waist up he looked like glowing metal**, as if full of fire, and that **from there down he looked like fire**; and **brilliant light surrounded him**. 28 Like the appearance of **a rainbow** in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. **When I saw it, I fell facedown**, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Ezek. 2:9 Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. **In it was a scroll, 10 which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.**

Ezek. 3:1 And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.” 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

Ezek. 3:3 Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” **So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.**

A. Noteworthy features

1. The heavens were opened—the vision is a glimpse into the spiritual realm.
2. God’s arrival was accompanied by a cloud, flashing lightning, and light.
3. Four living creatures (cherubim)
  - a) Appearance of a man
  - b) Four faces on each creature: man, lion, ox, and eagle
  - c) Bronze feet
  - d) 6 wings
  - e) Fire and lightning flash out from among them.
4. Above the cherubim is an ice-like expanse.
5. The sound of their wings was loud like the sound of the voice of God.
6. Above the expanse is a sapphire throne.
7. Sitting on the throne is a man-like figure.
  - a) Upper half of his body was like glowing metal.
  - b) Lower half of his body looked like fire.
8. A brilliant light like a rainbow shone around him.
9. Ezekiel fell on his face when he saw God.
10. Given a scroll of lament and woe written on both sides
11. Ezekiel eats the scroll; tastes sweet.

B. Later in Ezekiel there is another scene with this chariot throne (Ezekiel 10:1-22).

1. It is leaving the temple in Jerusalem.

*Ezek. 10:1 I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. 2 The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, “Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” And as I watched, he went in.*

*Ezek. 10:3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. 5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.*

*Ezek. 10:6 When the LORD commanded the man in linen, “Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim,” the man went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand to the fire that was among them. He took up some of it and put it into the hands of the man in linen, who took it and went*

out. 8 (Under the wings of the cherubim could be seen what looked like the hands of a man.)

Ezek. 10:9 I looked, and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one beside each of the cherubim; the wheels sparkled like chrysolite. 10 As for their appearance, the four of them looked alike; each was like a wheel intersecting a wheel. 11 As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced; the wheels did not turn about as the cherubim went. The cherubim went in whatever direction the head faced, without turning as they went. 12 **Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels.** 13 I heard the wheels being called "the whirling wheels." 14 Each of the cherubim had four faces: **One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.**

Ezek. 10:15 Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River. 16 When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. 17 When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

Ezek. 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. 19 While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD'S house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

Ezek. 10:20 **These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim.** 21 Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like the hands of a man. 22 Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one went straight ahead.

2. Noteworthy features
  - a) The bodies of the cherubim are covered with eyes.
  - b) They each have four faces: cherub, man, lion, eagle.
  - c) These are the same creatures he had seen earlier.
  - d) They are definitively referred to as cherubim.

#### **IV. Daniel 7 has many elements of Rev. 4 in the same order.**

- A. We went through this chapter a few weeks ago, so I will not do it again.
- B. Here are the points in common with Revelation 4 (this is the analysis of Beale).
  1. Introductory vision phraseology (Dan. 7:9 (cf. 7:2, 6-7); Rev. 4:1)
  2. A throne(s) set in heaven (Dan. 7:9a; Rev. 4:2a [cf. 4:4a])
  3. God sitting on a throne (Dan. 7:9b; Rev. 4:2b)
  4. God's appearance on the throne (Dan. 7:9c; Rev. 4:3a)

5. Fire before the throne (Dan. 7:9d-10a; Rev. 4:5)
  6. Heavenly servants surrounding the throne (Dan. 7:10b; Rev. 4:4b, 6b-10; 5:8, 11, 14)
  7. Book(s) before the throne (Dan. 7:10c; Rev. 5:1-5)
  8. The book(s) opened (Dan. 7:10c; Rev. 5:2-5, 9)
  9. A divine (messianic) figure approaching God's throne to receive authority to reign forever over a kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14a; Rev. 5:5b-7, 9a, 12-13)
  10. The kingdom's scope: "all peoples, nations, and tongues" (Dan. 7:14a (MT); Rev. 5:9b)
  11. The seer's emotional distress on account of the vision (Dan. 7:15; Rev. 5:4)
  12. The seer's reception of heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one of the heavenly throne servants (Dan. 7:16; Rev. 5:5a)
  13. The saints given divine authority to reign over a kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27a; Rev. 5:10)
  14. Concluding mention of God's eternal reign (Dan. 7:27b; Rev. 5:13-14)
- C. With these OT throne room scenes in mind, we will look at the throne room scene in Revelation 4

## V. Revelation 4:1-6a

*Rev. 4:1* After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones; and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

- A. A door standing open in heaven
  1. In Ezekiel, the heavens were opened; in Revelation, a door is open in heaven.

- a) The action of Revelation 1-3 took place in the holy place of the temple/tabernacle.
  - (1) The holy of holies was right next to the holy place (through a doorway).
  - (2) The holy of holies was the location of the ark of the covenant.
    - (a) The ark of the covenant was the throne of God.
- 2. As in Ezekiel, this indicates that the vision is a glimpse into the spiritual realities.
  - a) The listener is being ushered into the heavenly throne of God.
- B. John hears the same voice he heard in Revelation 1:10.
  - 1. It sounds like a trumpet.
    - a) A super loud voice appears to be a voice speaking for God himself.
    - b) We are never told whose voice it is.
  - 2. When the Israelites heard the sound of a trumpet (God's voice?) on Mount Sinai, it was terrifying.

*Ex. 20:18* When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance 19 and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."

- C. Come up here.
  - 1. John was invited into the throne room.
    - a) The fact that John, who was not a priest, was invited into the holy of holies is not a problem.
      - (1) It is in a vision.
      - (2) It is at the invitation of God himself.
      - (3) Isaiah also entered into the temple in a vision.
- D. I will show you what must take place after this.
  - 1. "what must take place"
    - a) We saw this phrase in Rev. 1:1 (ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι).
    - b) Many of the events at the end are horrible, but they have to happen.
  - 2. Verse one begins with "after this" (μετὰ ταῦτα) and it ends with "after this" (μετὰ ταῦτα)
    - a) But they mean something different.
      - (1) "After this" at the beginning means "after what John had already seen in his vision," he saw what is described in chapter 4 and following.
        - (a) Based on the timeline of the vision
      - (2) "After this" at the end means after the events which were taking place during the time of John.
        - (a) Based on the timeline of history

- E. I was in the spirit (ἐν πνεύματι).
  - 1. John uses this phrase every time he moves to a different vantage point.
    - a) I assume it indicates that John did not actually go to these places.
      - (1) Any movement was only in the vision.
- F. What follows is full of symbolic imagery.
  - 1. I will venture guesses as to what these symbols mean.
  - 2. He sees a throne with someone sitting on it.
    - a) I don't know why the coyness.
      - (1) It is common throughout Revelation and in OT visions for the reader to be held in suspense as to what is going on and who the actors are.
        - (a) In Ezekiel, we were held in suspense.
    - b) Appearance of jasper and carnelian
      - (1) Precious stones
        - (a) The exact stones associated with these words is in doubt.
        - (2) It is not clear what each stone symbolizes.
        - (3) Taken together, they indicate the majesty of God.

They describe in symbolic form the majesty of God, resplendent and clothed in unapproachable light. (Mounce, p. 121)

- (4) These are some of the stones listed as materials from which the New Jerusalem is made.
  - (a) So these stones are a hint of the new creation to come.
- c) A rainbow encircled the throne.
  - (1) The rainbow was created as a reminder of God's graciousness to Noah.
    - (a) So it could represent God's grace.
    - (b) But it also signals a new creation.

The precious stones together with the rainbow are an incipient hint, not only that this vision eventually will issue into a new creation, but that it already actually portrays the beginning of the new creation in heaven: the precious stones in 21:10-11, 18-23 are part of a depiction of the new creation, and the "rainbow" in the first revelatory sign of the new creation that emerged after the Noahic flood. That the new creation is inaugurated with Christ's redemptive work is apparent from 3:14 and the use of "new" in 5:9 to describe that work. (Beale, p. 321)

- d) 24 elders wearing white clothes and gold crowns
  - (1) White clothes signify purity and righteousness
  - (2) Gold crowns
    - (a) Two words for "crown"
      - (i) Στεφανος — wreath, a symbol signifying victory



- (ii) Διαδημα — crown, a symbol of authority
  - (b) The distinction does not appear to be sharp.
  - (c) The word used here is στεφανος (wreath).
    - (i) They have been victorious.
- (3) Who are these elders?
  - (a) Their actions and words appear to come from sanctified human beings.
    - (i) From here on in Revelation, they announce reward and judgment.
  - (b) There are 24 of them.
    - (i) This number is part of the symbolism of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12-14).
    - (ii) Twelve gates with the names of the tribes
    - (iii) Twelve foundations with the names of the apostles
  - (c) These elders appear to represent the saints from both OT and NT times
- e) Thunder and lightning from throne
  - (1) Signals the presence of God
    - (a) God being conspicuously present
    - (b) God taking momentous action
    - (c) Ex. giving the Law on Mt Sinai (Exodus 19:16)
  - (2) This expression is used 4 times in Revelation.
    - (a) Each time one extra word is added to it.
    - (b) Each time the significance of what God is doing is greater.
  - (3) In Revelation, it is always associated with the judgment of God.
    - (i) The completion of judgment (?)
  - (4) On this occasion, God is going to initiate the events that bring about the end—the beginning of the final judgment.
    - (a) The last use of this expression marks the beginning of the end for Babylon—the very last step in the final judgment.
- f) Seven lampstands and seven spirits
  - (1) These are the seven lampstands that were in the holy place.
    - (a) These are the seven churches.
    - (b) They are before God much like they were before Jesus in chapter 1.
- g) Sea of glass before the throne
  - (1) The sea represents the unrest of rebellious humanity.
    - (a) A stormy sea best represents this.
  - (2) A sea of glass suggests humanity brought to submission.
    - (a) All is still, no waves or turmoil.

- G. This is a picture of God in heaven, in complete control of the created universe.
  - 1. Having completely subdued sinful mankind
  - 2. Being honored by the heavenly beings

## VI. Revelation 4:6b-8

*In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 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. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:*

*“Holy, holy, holy  
is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was, and is, and is to come.”*

- A. God’s throne is surrounded by “living creatures.”
  - 1. Four Mischwesen
    - a) Wings make three of them Mischwesen (only the eagle is not obviously a Mischwesen).
    - b) Mischwesen were often depicted beside kings on their thrones.
      - (1) Mischwesen were thought to be powerful.
      - (2) They underscored the power and magnificence of the king.
  - 2. They are reminiscent of the cherubim in Ezekiel.
    - a) In Ezekiel 1:10, they were the same animals.
      - (1) But they each had four faces.
        - (a) Man, lion, ox, eagle
      - (2) They accompanied the throne of God (and propelled it).
    - b) In Ezekiel 10:14, the animals are cherub, man, lion, eagle.
      - (1) But we are assured they are the same creatures as in Ezekiel chapter 1 (Ezekiel 10:20).
        - (a) I don’t know why there is this difference.
    - c) In Revelation, they are four different creatures.
      - (1) But the same animals
    - d) These “living creatures” in Revelation must be cherubim.

Digression: It is futile to try to figure out what cherubim actually look like. I doubt they actually exist. They are symbolic figures. As such they take on different characteristics in each vision, to suit the purposes of the vision.

- e) I don’t know why in Revelation they are four different looking creatures as opposed to what we had in Ezekiel.
  - (1) I don’t know what is symbolized by the different animals.
- 3. Six wings

- a) Wings are thought to connote speed of movement.
- 4. Eyes all over
  - a) Knowledgeable and wise
- 5. Singing praises to God, day and night
  - a) In Isaiah there were six-winged seraphim above God on his throne.
    - (1) I believe seraphim and cherubim are the same thing.
    - (2) They were singing to each other.
    - (3) They sang this song:
      - “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”
      - (a) This song in Isaiah is the only other place where “Holy, holy, holy” appears.
        - (i) God’s holiness is a major point of emphasis in Isaiah.
      - (b) Revelation replaces “the whole earth is full of his glory” with “who was, and is, and is to come.”
        - (i) God’s eternity and transcendence is a bigger theme in Revelation than his holiness.
        - (ii) God’s eternity is referred to three times in these few verses.
  - b) This is a song of glory, honor, and thanks.
- 6. What do these living creatures represent?
  - a) Most commentators think they represent all of creation.
  - b) Beale thinks they represent creation and the Creator.
  - c) My best guess—they represent God’s power in the created order.

## VII. Revelation 4:9-11

*9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:*

*Rev. 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*

- A. The song of the elders
  - 1. In response to the song of the living creatures, the elders sing their own song.

- a) They bow down and worship God.
- b) They throw their wreaths (στεφανος) at God's feet.
  - (1) They acknowledge God is responsible for them overcoming.
- c) God is worthy of praise because he gave life to all living creatures (especially human beings).
  - (1) God put together this world, its inhabitants, and all that they do.
  - (2) God is the author of the incredible story we call history (the actions and interactions over time of humans).
  - (3) That is a very amazing and praiseworthy thing

## VIII. Conclusion

- A. What is the purpose of this throne room scene in general?
  - 1. It is all in symbols.
    - a) All of the throne room scenes are symbolic.
    - b) The imagery is similar but not the same.
      - (1) You can't put the different visions together and end up with a picture of the **real** throne room.
        - (a) It is all symbolic.
      - (2) We can't know if there is a real throne room nor what it looks like, if there is.
      - (3) Each vision is playing with the symbolism and making changes to suit its particular purposes.
  - 2. Observations on OT throne room scenes
    - a) Seers are given throne room scenes when God's people are greatly threatened.
      - (1) Isaiah—threat of the Assyrians
      - (2) Ezekiel—Judeans taken into exile
      - (3) Daniel—Judeans taken into exile
    - b) It provides a broader perspective.
      - (1) Pans back to see God firmly in control and sitting on his throne
        - (a) In each of these scenes, God is always pictured on his throne.
    - c) It displays the magnificence of God.
      - (1) Cherubim and other attendants add to the magnificence of God.
      - (2) Expensive materials emphasize the power and glory of God.
      - (3) The descriptions of God stress his power and righteousness.
- B. Role of throne room scene in Revelation
  - 1. Establish John as seer of God's visions
  - 2. Reminds us of the bigger perspective

- a) God is firmly in control of history.
  - b) God will assert his power and control when the time is right.
3. It was important to establish these things before describing the final events.
- a) Progression of the first five chapters
    - (1) We saw Jesus as heavenly high priest in Rev. 1-3.
      - (a) Providing guidance to the churches
    - (2) In chapter 4, we see YHWH as Lord of all creation.
      - (a) Worshipped by all the creatures in heaven
    - (3) In chapter 5, we see Jesus take his place as king ready to go out and establish control of realm.
- C. Why is this broader perspective important?
- 1. It's pulling back the curtain.
    - a) Reality is not what it seems to be.
    - b) The reality is that YHWH is firmly in control and sitting on his throne.
  - 2. We can relax and trust God to do what he needs to do.
    - a) It is easy to become preoccupied with the immediate circumstances and lose track of the bigger picture.
  - 3. In chapter 5, we will see God coronate the resurrected Messiah.
    - a) We will not see Jesus as high priest for the rest of the book.
    - b) The Messiah will be granted authority over the kingdoms of the world.
  - 4. In the rest of Revelation, Jesus will establish his rule over the world.
    - a) He will bring judgment.
    - b) He will destroy evil.
  - 5. Leading up to the final judgment, God's people will be greatly threatened.
    - a) This is a reminder that God is firmly in control of what is happening.