

Revelation - Chapter 4 and 5

Worship in Heaven and Triumph of the Lamb

In keeping with the outline that Jesus gave John in the first chapter of Revelation, John has seen the glorified Jesus as He is in Heaven and will be when He returns and the letters to the seven churches on how to keep their spiritual fires burning until Jesus returns. Now God unfolds to John the details of the future, “what will take place later.”

““Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”

(Revelation 1:19, NASB95)

Worship In Heaven

John witnesses a great scene of worship in Heaven that begins with a hymn of creation and ends with a hymn of redemption. There are 5 hymns beginning with a quartet of 4 living creatures, then the elders join in, then a myriad of angels, ending with all created beings in the universe in a mighty chorus of praise to God. Their song anticipates paradise lost becoming paradise regained. The events described in these two chapters anticipate the events about to strike the earth.



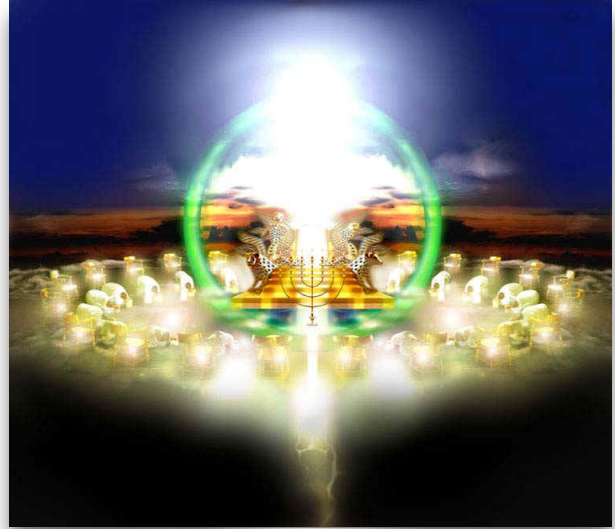
Jesus in the same trumpet like voice from earlier in Chapter 3, again indicating His deity, invites John to “come up here” meaning to the third heaven, the immediate presence of God (Cor 12:2-4). What John witnesses is the Church in Heaven.

Although not explicitly stated in Revelation the Rapture of the Church has occurred and reference to the Church does not appear again until Chapter 19 and 22 (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thes 4:16-17; Rev 19:7; 22:16). This means that in John’s vision the Church Age has ended and the Church is not a participant in the scenes of the tribulation that follow. Saints who come to know the Lord during the Tribulation period are described as saved Israelites or saved Gentiles.

Throne of God

John sees an incredible and spectacular display of the throne and glory of God. The throne appears to be standing because it is not a physical structure but symbolic of the temple in heaven. The temple in heaven is not a physical structure but is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (Rev 21:22).

The first impression John had of God is that of color - jasper, carnelian, surrounded by a rainbow or circle of emerald:

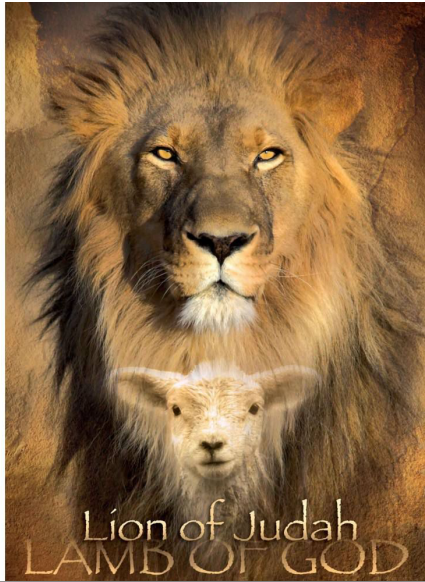


- Jasper - is a crystal clear stone indicating purity and will be in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:19-20).
- Carnelian - a fiery blood red ruby, expressing the shining beauty of God's glory, representing Christ's blood sacrificed for the Church and God's blazing wrath about to be poured out on the rebellious world (Rev 6-19).
- Rainbow of emerald - In the Old Testament the rainbow stood for the covenant that God made with the Israelites (Gen 9:13-15). The rainbow is a perfect circle around the throne and represents eternity. Green is the color of life. The emerald circle represents eternal life.

The significance goes far beyond color. The jasper and carnelian are the first and last of the 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest garments representing all 12 tribes before the throne of God:

- The jasper represented Reuben the firstborn of Jacob whose name means "behold a son."
- The carnelian represented Benjamin the youngest of Jacobs 12 sons, whose name means, "son of my right hand."
- Christ fulfills both these functions: He is the first begotten Son and the Son of God's right hand.

John sees God on the throne in relation to the nation Israel. Although the tribulation will be a time of terrible wrath and judgement, God's covenant relationship with Israel will remain intact. ¹



Jesus

Jesus is represented in several forms: “The Lion of the tribe of Judah”, “the root of David”, “Lamb standing as if slain having 7 eyes and 7 horns which are the 7 spirits of God” (Rev 5:5 6).

- Christ came from the tribe of Judah,
- Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be a descendant of David (Isa 11:10).
- Christ as Lion calls attention to Jesus as the sovereign Judge of the world especially at His second coming (Gen 49:9-10).
- Christ as the lamb identifies Christ as the lamb who was sacrificed at His first coming is the same person as the glorified Christ of the Book of Revelation.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity is represented as the “7 lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 4:5).

- The number seven indicates perfection and the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit revealed in Isaiah 11:2-3.
- The Holy Spirit has shown physical form in several places in the Bible: descending like a dove on Christ at His baptism (Matt 3:16) and on the day of Pentecost as “tongues of fire that came to rest in each of them” (Acts 2:3).

In Heaven John witnesses God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



24 Thrones and 24 Elders



John also sees 24 thrones around the throne of God and 24 elders dressed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads. Who are these elders? John never clearly identifies the heavenly elders but we can make a few deductions:

- They are probably humans and not angels since angels do not age, sit on thrones, reign, nor wear crowns.
- They are dressed in white which symbolizes Christ's righteousness imputed to believers at their salvation.
- The crowns worn here refers to the victor's crown worn by those who successfully completed and won the victory referring to salvation (Rev 2:10; 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12).
- The term elder is used in the Bible to speak of older men in general and rulers of both Israel and the church.
- They probably do not represent Israel as a nation because it has not been redeemed yet and won't be until Jesus' second coming. (24 courses of Leviticus priests and 24 divisions of singers in the temple)
- They are not symbolic because they speak to each other.
- John MacArthur says that they most likely represent those in the raptured church. ²
- Some believe they are the 12 Apostles and the 12 patriarchs from the Old Testament.

4 living creatures

The actual translation is living ones. Since John describes them as having wings and they are also seen in Ezekiel and Isaiah they appear to be angels (Eze 1:5, 10:12, 14-15. Isa 6:2,3).



Their station is in the inner circle nearest the throne. Because they have eyes in front and back means they have full awareness and nothing escapes their scrutiny. Their six wings denotes that their supreme responsibility is to worship God. John describes them in relation to the world and we can also look at the Old and New Testament meanings:

John's Description of Living Ones	OT 12 Tribes	Jesus in NT Gospel
Lion - king of the beasts	Judah	King in Matthew
Calf or ox - patience and continuous	Emphraim	Faithful One in Mark
Eagle - sovereign and supreme	Dan	Divine Son of God in
Man - greatest of God's creation	Reuben	Human presented in

First Heavenly Hymn

Periodically the 4 living creatures give special glory and honor and thanks to God. Their emphasis is on the divine attributes and worthiness of God. The 4 living creatures continually say day and night the first hymn John hears:

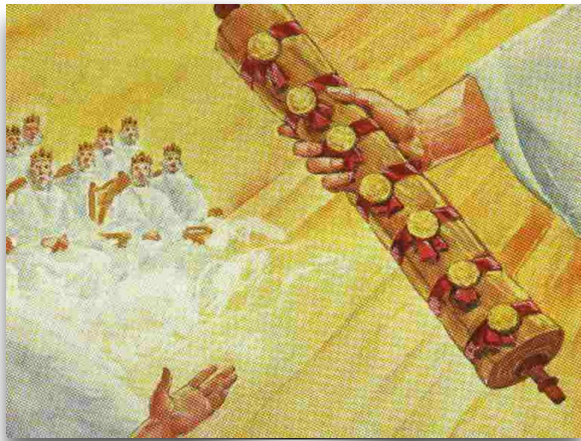
".....'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.'" (Revelation 4:8, NASB95)

Second Heavenly Hymn

The 24 elders join them in praise of recognizing God as the sovereign Creator of the universe. Casting their crowns before Him they testify had it not been for God's grace, salvation and goodness they could not have victory over sin and death; everything they had was from Him. ³

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” (Revelation 4:11, NASB95)

Title Deed to the Earth



John then witnesses a scene that begins what will be a dramatic change in the course of history. God is holding in His right hand a scroll that is the title deed to the earth. The scroll has writing on both sides and is sealed up with seven seals. Unlike other deeds it does not record what Christ will inherit but how Christ will regain his rightful inheritance. The only One who can successively break the 7 seals as the scroll is unrolled is the One to whom the deed rightfully belongs: Jesus Christ.

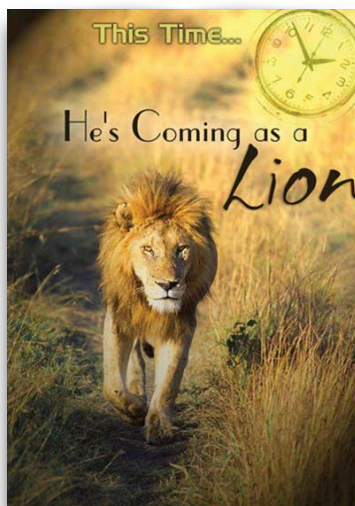
Adam and Eve turned over the dominion of the earth that God gave them to Satan (2 Pet 2:19). John's tears represent the centuries of man's sin and hopelessness at trying to save themselves beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Jeremiah 32 illustrates the use of a similar document. Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel, was desperate for Jeremiah to purchase a field. They both knew that the land would be seized by the Babylonian army soon but God commanded Jeremiah to purchase the field in spite of the potential loss as a sign that the Babylonian captivity would not be permanent.



Jesus is the only one found to be worthy to open the deed to the earth; our kinsman-redeemer who can buy back the land and all that was lost, our sinless sacrifice. Although introduced by the elder as a Lion, John sees a slain Lamb.

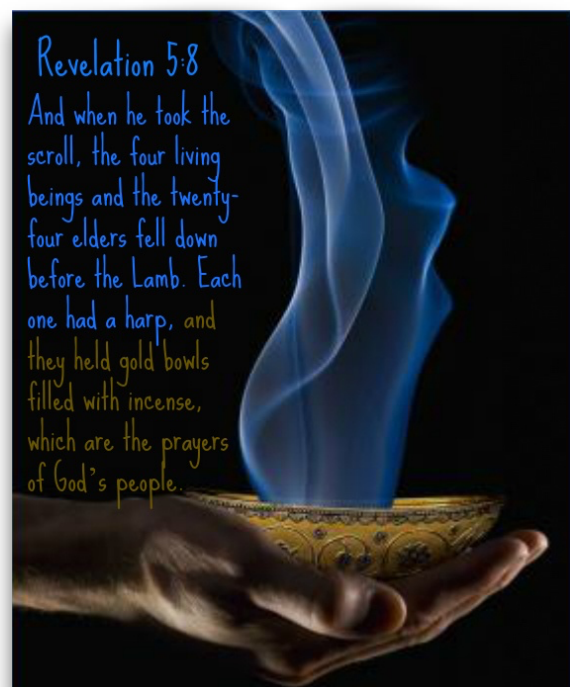
- The Lamb refers to Jesus' first coming and His death.
- The Lamb is standing between the throne of God and the elders because He has been resurrected.
- He is the reigning Lamb (John 1:29).
- The Lamb has seven horns which speaks of His omnipotence, 7 eyes which speaks of His omniscience and then 7 spirits speaking of His omnipresence.



The Lion refers to His second coming and sovereign judgment of the world. This is the only place in Rev that Jesus is referred to as a Lion. The word "Lamb" is found 27 times in Revelation and nowhere else in the NT. ⁴

Third Heavenly Hymn

Jesus opens the scroll and the great heavenly praise continues starting with the 4 living creatures (Heb 1:6). The 24 elders are holding harps and offering the prayers of the saints symbolized by bowls of incense. Harps symbolize praise; in the OT many of the Psalms were sung to harp music (Psalm 98:5). When the high priests went into the temple, they would take a bowl of incense so the aroma would perfume the air. Here the prayers of the saints are a sweet smelling savor to God.



The new song is of Christ's redemption of men from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The song is not a new message but is new because it has never been heard before and the singers are now redeemed and up in heaven.

Only the harp and trumpet are mentioned as musical instruments in heavenly worship in the book of Revelation. The living creatures and elders burst into praise of the Lamb:

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 'You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'"

(Revelation 5:9–10, NASB95)

Fourth Heavenly Hymn



As another wave of worship begins, John witnessed an unusual event: angels singing. Early in creation Job records that the morning stars or angels sang but since sin entered the world the angels have not sung (Job 38:7). Now a number of angels too large to count appear around the throne along with the 4 living creatures and 24 elders all joining in a mighty symphony to God singing that the Lamb is worthy to open the seals on the scroll.

"....Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." (Revelation 5:12, NASB95)

Fifth Heavenly Hymn

Uncontainable jubilation then flowed outward from God's throne as the rest of creation joins in unable to contain their joy over their upcoming redemption. They proclaim the blessing and praise of God and the Lamb, their honor, glory, and dominion forever:

"And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'" (Revelation 5:13, NASB95)

Jesus is Worthy

In Chapter 4 and 5 we learn that Jesus is worthy to redeem the earth because:

- He made the earth
- He has redeemed mankind
- He has prevailed.

Jesus will regain His rightful inheritance by the divine judgements about to be poured out on the earth. Although the scroll is a scroll of doom and judgement it is also a scroll of redemption. It tells how Christ will redeem the world from Satan and those with him. Ezekiel describes this same scroll in his vision of Heaven (Eze 2:9-10). ⁵

John viewed the great, culminating act of history, the act that will signal the end of man's day. The ultimate goal of redemption is about to be seen; paradise will be regained, Eden restored. Before John's wondering eyes the Lamb came and took the book right out of the hand of God who sat on the throne. Jesus, the worthy One has arrived to take back what is rightfully His.

The creation is unable to contain its joy over its upcoming redemption. Lost in praise the 4 living creatures could only keep saying "Amen" which means let it be, make it happen. Soon this mighty host would march out of Heaven to execute judgment, gather God's people, and return with Christ when He sets up His earthly kingdom. The stage for God's ultimate plan has been set in the throne room of God. ⁶

It is also clear from this revelation that Heaven is real. These two chapters reveal the indescribable glory and infinite majesty of the Godhead in heaven. Those who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be numbered among the tens of thousands pictured as giving their worship and praise to the Savior. The following chapters reveal the sovereign power of God expressed in judgement on a wicked world sunk in unprecedented depths of sin and blasphemy. ⁷

Today we still have the opportunity to accept the forgiveness and grace of God and one day soon join in the heavenly chorus of praise to God. Those who hear and respond to the divine invitation have the promise of blessing throughout eternity and deliverance from the time of judgment that will fall upon those who neglect to enter into the safety of salvation in their day of opportunity. Won't you join the millions of redeemed peoples in Heaven and on the earth and call on the name of Jesus Christ and be saved?

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! And He shall reign forever and ever!
(Handel's Messiah)