

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.
Revelation 4:1-6a NIV

Church on the Brink The Message of Revelation-Part 3

Introduction: In the opening three chapters the Christians in Asia Minor were to receive personal correspondence from the risen and glorified Lord of the Church.

- ✓ An impending crisis is coming (smashing, tyranny of Rome)
- ✓ Whether they are judged or praised hinges solely on their on their exclusive loyalty to Christ
- ✓ There are both external and internal pressures and the central concern is the church's readiness or lack thereof (assimilation, complacency, persecution)
- ✓ Beginning in chapter 6 the story of what is about to take place on earth begins to unfold (conquest, war, famine, death, Christian martyrdom, ultimately to be responded to by divine judgment)
- ✓ In chapters 4 and 5 subject of today, the readers are given a view from above, the eternal context in which they are to understand their own present existence and all that follows
- ✓ This throne room vision is to remind believers living in the shadow of impending persecution that an all-knowing and all powerful God is still in control

I. Worship of God as Creator (Revelation 4)

NOTE: This vision of John is not unlike what Ezekiel (1:4-14) and Isaiah (6:1-3) experienced

A. The Throne in Heaven and its occupant's majesty (4:1-6a)

1. Door in heaven and invitation to come up and see (just an invite to view things from a heavenly vantage point)

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." Revelation 4:1 NIV

2. First thing John sees is a throne (more than 40 times in Revelation and symbolizes sovereignty and authority of God)

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. Revelation 4:2 NIV

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. Isaiah 6:1 NIV

God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. Psalms 47:8 NIV

3. The brilliance of One sitting on the throne

And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Revelation 4:3 NIV

NOTE: Instead of looking for specific meaning in the stones, note it depicts the brilliance and majesty

He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent Psalms 104:2 NIV

Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:17 NIV

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. Ezekiel 1:26-28 NIV

4. Twenty-four elders

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. Revelation 4:4 NIV

- a. Great controversy
- b. Appear to be overcomers (humans) although at the time their activities appear to be angelic
- c. Key is that they offer their worship to the One sitting on the Throne

5. Thunder and lightning speak of power of the One on the Throne

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. Revelation 4:5 NIV

(Reminds us a theophony at Sinai)

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. Exodus 19:16-19 NIV

6. Sea of glass

Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. Revelation 4:6 NIV

(Light shining off the glass-brilliant majesty of the One seated on the Throne).

B. The Occupants of Heaven and their Worship (4:6b-11)

1. The four living creatures

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." Revelation 4:6-8 NIV

NOTE: Almost exactly Ezekiel 1:4-24 (clearly angelic)-clearly lead in worship

- a. Eyes-front and back-some type of divine herald from which nothing can be hidden
- b. Like a lion, or human, eagle

NOTE: All sorts of attempts to parallel this with gospels or other pictures. Let them speak simply that all creation joins in worshipping the One who sits on the Throne.

- c. Six wings (like Seraphim of Isaiah 6)-2 cover face, feet, fly

Reverence, holy ground, work

- d. Content of their worship-Holy, Holy, Holy

Set apart, totally other, only One deserving

2. The worship of the 24 elders

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: 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." Revelation 4:9-11 NIV

- a. Prostrate before the Throne
- b. Cast crowns-aware that their authority is delegated, no rights of their own
- c. Creation worships for His character-Holy, Holy, Holy
- d. Humanity (24 elders) worships Him for His creation

Summary: John takes the weary and sometimes unfaithful believers of the churches in Asia Minor into the Throne room of eternal God. See the awesome splendor and majesty that surrounds God. They may be about to suffer-but God is sovereign Lord of the universe.

NOTE: Not all is said-all this could be said by any Jew-John is a Christian Jew-divine response of this greatness is found in the slain Lamb of chapter 5!

II. Worship of the Lamb who is Alone Worthy to Open the Scroll (Revelation 5)

NOTE: Here the attention moves from God on the Throne surrounded by worshippers to the Lamb who is alone worthy to open the scroll of destiny

- ✓ Worship God for His role in creation
- ✓ Now Worship the Lamb for His work of redemption

A. The Unopened Scroll

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Revelation 5:1-4 NIV

1. This scroll contained the future course of history, divine destiny

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalms 139:16 NIV

2. No one worthy to open the scroll
3. John's response-I wept much (wept and wept)
4. The promise to show John what would take place in danger of being thwarted

B. The Lion who is a Lamb

Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Revelation 5:5-7 NIV

1. Hope signified by elder-behold-Lion of the Tribe of Judah has triumphed

You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. Genesis 49:9-10 NIV

NOTE ALSO: Root of David

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
Isaiah 11:1NIV*

2. What John sees is no Lion, but a Lamb
 - a. Slain lamb-death
 - b. Standing-resurrection (Christ's triumphs by both death and resurrection)
 - c. Horns-His great strength
 - d. Eyes-Spirit's anointing
- C. The rejoicing of heaven

*He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." 11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" 13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"
Revelation 5:7-13 NIV*

- ✓ Amazing Scene of Worship!
- ✓ Authentic Worship!
- ✓ Passionate Worship!

1. There are no divided loyalties. (Lamb is the object of everyone's worship). Not song-style, not tradition, the Lamb who redeemed us!
2. There are no distracting circumstances. (John invited to the Throne room) to leave the pending struggle.
3. There are no divisive barriers. (Every tribe, tongue, human, angel).
4. There are no distanced bystanders. (The circle is ever widening) ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands, of thousands.

Conclusion:

*The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.
Revelation 5:14 NIV*

NOTE: The four living creatures were the first to offer praise in the Throne Room vision of chapters 4 and 5 and appropriately bring the vision to a close

- ✓ A central truth that governs the book of Revelation
- ✓ By His sacrificial death and resurrection, the Lamb has taken control over the course of history and guaranteed its future! (No matter how bad)
- ✓ The future on earth may be solemn (chapter 6) but the Lamb has already won the battle against sin and so we can have confidence in troubled times and have a hope that is steadfast and sure.