

Chapters 4 & 5

Chapter 4: The Throne Room of God

1. Chapters 4 & 5 usher us into the presence of God.
 - a. Through these key chapters of Revelation, suffering Christians were shown:
 - i. Contrary to appearances, God was still on His throne
 - ii. God, not the Roman emperor, was in control
 - iii. Assurance that God had His plans and purposes and would ultimately work out all things according to His will.
2. We will examine the vision in chapter 4 as a whole; but don't get overwhelmed by the details:
 - a. The 24 elders
 - b. The sea of glass
 - c. The meaning and purpose of the 4 beasts
3. The scene was designed to dazzle the eyes and stagger the imagination
4. Let us try to see what John saw:

The glory and the grandeur of the vision exceeded anything that John could have imagined. Half-blinded by the brilliance and bewildered by the spectacle, he strove to sort out the scene before him. At center stage was a massive throne, the dais of the Almighty. Pulsating from the throne were the dazzling colors of the rainbow. Encircling the throne was a ring of smaller thrones. On those thrones were aged men, white-robed and golden-crowned, their craggy faces bathed in celestial radiance.

Without warning, an ominous rumbling of thunder and jagged flashes of lightning came from the throne. Then seven lamps flared up at the foot of the throne, startling John. Between him and that raw power was a vast shining expanse—and John was glad of the distance. His heart was pounding so hard that it seemed as if it might burst from his chest.

As John's eyes adjusted, his gaze was able to penetrate the glare surrounding the throne, and he saw four fantastic creatures. Their form was both beautiful and grotesque. All had wings and were covered with eyes—unblinking, all-seeing eyes. Through the Spirit, John knew that they were the bravest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest beings in the universe. Then the apostle became aware of their song. As they praised the One who sat on the throne, their song filled the apostle's soul: "Holy, holy, holy,

is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." John was overcome with awe.

5. Primary purpose of the vision
 - a. To impact each person's mind and heart with the greatness of God
 - b. Details are not meant to call attention to themselves, but to enhance that concept!

6. Practical effect of the vision
 - a. John, nor any reader or hearer, could or would think of the "might" of Rome the same way again!
 - b. Compared to God's throne, Domitian's throne was nothing more than a rickety stool.

4:1-5

7. Verse 1
 - a. "After these things I looked..."
 - i. Phrase is used often in Revelation to introduce a new vision (see 7:1,9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1).
 - ii. After the vision and the seven letters of the first few chapters, Jesus wanted to show John something new.
 - iii. Premillennialists believe these two chapters refer to a "Rapture" in the air that precede a seven year Tribulation.
 - iv. Some PMs teach that the seven churches represent seven periods of the church...
 1. "After these things" means after the seven periods were fulfilled.
 2. This is a FALSE interpretation based on context and historical record as well as the overall understanding of the "rules" of interpretation.
 - b. "...behold..."
 - i. indicates excitement
 - c. "...a door standing open in heaven..."
 - i. John did not presume to enter but waited for an invitation
 - d. "...a voice...like a trumpet..."
 - i. Probably the voice of Jesus
 - ii. The voice invited John to come
 - e. "...what must take place after..."
 - i. Included:
 1. What was in store for the church
 2. What Rome would reap for her sins
 3. How this world would be terminated
 4. What the world to come would be like
 - ii. Notice "must"
 1. Not things that "ought" to happen or "might" happen but "must" happen...
 2. These things had to happen and they would happen because it was God's will.
8. Verse 2
 - a. "...in the Spirit..."
 - i. John was being guided by the Spirit and was ready to respond
 - ii. This phrase used from time to time to show that during the *entire* revelation John was under God's control.
 - b. Immediately John was taken through the open door into the throne room of heaven.
 - c. "...a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne..."
 - i. Throne is the one central throne of God

9. Verse 3

- a. "...He who was sitting was like jasper...and a sardius...a rainbow...like an emerald..."
 - i. A depiction of the Lord in terms of light and color
 - ii. Jasper
 1. A well-known jewel
 2. Not necessarily the green variety but clear
 3. Found in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:20;39:13)
 4. Found in the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18,19)
 5. Represents the glory of God and may represent His holiness
 - iii. Sardius
 1. Also a prized stone
 2. Also in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:17)
 3. Also part of the heavenly city's foundation (Rev. 21:20)
 4. May be similar in appearance of a ruby
 5. Symbolic of God's fiery wrath
 - iv. Emerald
 1. Again, well-known
 2. Deep, glowing green
 3. Suggest God's mercy
 4. A restful color
 - v. Rainbow
 1. Could be translated "bow" or "circle" or even "halo"
 2. "rainbow" most accurate
 3. Reminds us of the wrath and mercy of God
 4. Also proof that God keeps His word
 5. Assurance to persecuted Christians that God would keep His promise to protect and preserve them...

10. Verse 4

- a. The 24 elders
 - i. Do not lose sight of the fact that the purpose of these symbols is to show the grandeur of God...
 1. "Elders" is the Greek word presbuteros, which literally means "older one"
 - a. Does not refer to "church officials"
 - b. Refers to those who were older and more mature
 2. "crowns" refer to the *stephanos*, the crown of victory
 - ii. Who were the 24 older ones?
 1. Note: they had received three of the blessings Jesus had pledged to Christians who overcame
 - a. They were reigning (2:26,27; 3:21)
 - b. They were wearing white garments (3:5)
 - c. They had victory crowns (2:10)
 2. These were Christians who had been victorious!
 - a. Primary objection: they seem to be distinct from the saved
 - b. Keep in mind this "symbol" was there to point to the throne NOT to draw attention to itself!
 3. What about "24"?
 - a. This is "12" – which indicates religious completeness – times 2!

- b. This would suggest an all encompassing representation of all those who remain faithful until death...
- c. Other suggestions:
 - i. Representative of the redeemed from every age
 - 1. 12 tribes – God's people of the OT
 - 2. 12 apostles – God's people of the NT
 - ii. The priestly tribe of Levi had 24 divisions according to function
- 4. Keep in mind ultimately, this does not represent a group of "super saints"
- 5. Note: they gave glory to God and took none for themselves!

11. Verse 5

- a. "...flashes of lightning and sounds...of thunder"
 - i. This symbol of a thunderstorm would indicate God's power – especially in judgment of those who do not acknowledge Him as Lord
- b. "...seven lamps...seven Spirits..."
 - i. Seven Spirits likely represented the Holy Spirit
 - ii. "before the throne"
 - 1. Indicates His readiness to carry out divine decisions
 - iii. "seven lamps"
 - 1. The lampstand in the tabernacle with its seven lamps – the source of light in the holy place (Ex. 25:31-37;40:24)

12. Verse 6

- a. "...before the throne...a sea of glass..."
 - i. In first century, most glass was dark and opaque.
 - 1. Clear glass or "crystal" glass was rare and extremely valuable, much like gold.
 - ii. The "sea" may have several meanings:
 - 1. A mass of humanity
 - 2. A barrier between us and God until the saved are taken up to heaven
 - a. Most likely
- b. "...center and around the throne.."
 - i. A unique relationship with the throne
- c. "...four living creatures..."
 - i. Not "beasts" but "living creatures or ones"
 - ii. The predecessors to these are found in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 & 10
 - iii. These four are a composite of the creatures seen earlier by Isaiah and Ezekiel

13. Verse 7

- a. The descriptions – first part relates to Ezekiel's vision
 - i. 4 descriptions, one face, the same as those mentioned by Ezekiel
 - 1. A lion
 - 2. A bull-calf or ox
 - 3. A man
 - 4. An eagle
 - ii. Other than the faces, we cannot be sure of the forms of the four creatures
 - iii. Ezekiel's beings all looked alike...this may or not have been true here.

- iv. "full of eyes" – indication of being all-knowing
- v. Brave as a lion
- vi. Strong as an ox
- vii. Shrewd as a man
- viii. Fast as an eagle
- b. Allegorizing
 - i. A method of interpretation that reveals more what the interpreter thinks not necessarily what the Bible says
 - ii. This method made the 4 creatures represent the four Gospel writers
 - 1. Matthew = man
 - 2. Mark = lion
 - 3. Luke = ox
 - 4. John = eagle
 - iii. Nothing in the text indicates this interpretation is accurate.

14. Verse 8

- a. Second part relates to Isaiah's vision
 - i. Creatures cried "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Is 6:2,3)
 - ii. 6 wings
 - 1. 2 to hide their faces – humility
 - 2. 2 to cover their feet – modesty
 - 3. 2 to fly – service
- b. What are these incredible creatures?
 - i. Isaiah called them "seraphim" (Is. 6:2,6)
 - 1. Hebrew meaning "shining one" or "burning one"
 - ii. Ezekiel called them "cherubim" (Ez. 10:15,20)
 - 1. Also mentioned in Gen. 3:24 and Ex. 25:18-20,22
 - iii. Seraphim and Cherubim are among the highest of God's creation, possibly two special orders of angels
 - 1. "Archangels" is the term we often hear or use
 - 2. Michael was referred as such (Jude 9; Dan. 12:1)
 - iv. Perhaps these creatures were archangels? Perhaps they represented all creation?
 - 1. "4" is the cosmic or creation number
 - 2. They may also simply be a reminder of God's character
- c. The action resumes with a remarkable worship service
 - i. First praised God for His purity
 - 1. 3-fold use of the word "holy" was a Hebrew way of expressing something to the ultimate degree
 - a. God was the most holy
 - ii. Then they acknowledged His power
 - 1. "The Almighty"
 - 2. It belonged to God alone, not Domitian
 - iii. Finally they sang of God's permanence...
 - 1. "who was and who is and who is to come..."
 - 2. God always remains the same

15. Verse 9

- a. They took no praise for themselves, but gave all glory to God!"

16. Verse 10

- a. The 24 elders also joined the praise and giving glory to God
 - i. They cast their crowns before the throne
 - ii. A sign of acknowledgement that God had made the victory possible.
 - iii. But they did it willingly were as typically a king was forced to relinquish their crown!

17. Verse 11

- a. "...glory, honor and power..."
 - i. In the original text preceded by "the" implying that God alone is worthy of these expressions of praise.

18. The focal point

- a. Is the throne...everything else is seen in relationship to the throne
 - i. 24 elders seated around the throne (v4)
 - ii. Lightning and thunder came from the throne (v5)
 - iii. Sevenfold Spirit and sea of Glass were before the throne (v5,6)
 - iv. Four creatures were in the center and around the throne (v6)
 - v. All worship was directed toward the throne (v9,10)

Chapter 5: The Book with Seven Seals

19. Chapters 4 & 5 go together
 - a. Chapter 4 centers on worship to God as Creator
 - b. Chapter 5 centers on worship to Christ as Redeemer
 - c. The throne remains center stage

5:1-5

20. Verse 1
 - a. The tension begins to build
 - b. The scroll in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne
 - i. It had two peculiarities
 1. The paper had been written on both sides
 - a. Because of the way paper was made from papyrus, it was normally difficult to write on both sides
 - b. But here, both sides were used
 - c. Reminder of the scroll in Ezekiel 2:9,10
 - d. This may suggest the completeness of the message
 2. The scroll was sealed with seven seals
 - a. A sign of the document being significant – had been done for centuries
 - b. Melted wax would be dropped on the edge of a rolled up document and before it hardened, a ring or stamp with an insignia was pressed into the wax.
 - c. A seal served three purposes:
 - i. Verified ownership
 - ii. Assured genuineness
 - iii. Protected the contents
 1. Much like a medicine bottle
 - d. Seven seals meant it was completely sealed
 - ii. Was it seven seals on one document or seven seals on seven documents?
 1. Most likely seven on one
 - iii. What was written on the scroll?
 1. Lots of speculation...including one that said it was a will
 - a. Roman wills were sealed with seven seals
 - b. Would this mean it was the last will and testament of Jesus?
 2. But the confusion surrounding “what” is written there is a little surprising since we are told, in great detail, what the message is beginning in chapter 6!

- a. *The scroll contained the remainder of the Book of Revelation – chapters 6 through 22!*
- b. We'll note when each seal is broken, what happens, and what is revealed at the appropriate times in the remainder of our study.

21. Verse 2

- a. The strong angel
 - i. A challenge is issued – “Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?”
 - ii. The one who broke a sealed document was responsible for the contents of that document thereafter!
 - iii. After the challenge, John waited for a response...
 - 1. Wouldn't he have expected someone to be found since he was to write down what he saw and heard (1:19)?

22. Verse 3

- a. No one was found...
 - i. In heaven...
 - 1. Angels
 - 2. Seraphim
 - 3. Cherubim
 - 4. Archangels such as Michael
 - ii. On earth...
 - 1. Christian leaders
 - 2. godly saints
 - 3. John himself!
 - iii. Under the earth
 - 1. the Hadean world (unseen) where the dead await judgment
 - 2. This might also include those who had passed on...Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah...

23. Verse 4

- a. John began to weep
 - i. “to weep bitterly or wail”
 - ii. Same word used when Jesus “wept over Jerusalem” (Luke 19:41)
 - iii. Caused by anguish
 - iv. John wept because of his deep concern for his suffering brothers and sisters and he wanted to know God's redemptive plan.

24. Verse 5

- a. An elder...
 - i. Shares with John that there is One worthy
 - ii. The titles are Messianic expressions:
 - 1. Lion of the tribe of Judah

- a. Genesis 49:8-11
 - b. The greatest one who would descend from Jacob's fourth son
- 2. Root of David
 - a. Isaiah 11
 - b. "root of Jesse" – David's father
 - c. The Messiah would come from David's line of course
- iii. The Lion and Root had "overcome"
 - 1. The word in Greek is the verb form of the word "victory" – nike
 - 2. Since he was victorious, he was worthy to open the book
 - 3. Primarily refers to his overcoming death or victory over death
- iv. Of course, the passage speaks of Jesus

5:6-10

25. Verse 6

- a. The Lamb
 - i. Instead of a strong, intimidating presence, John sees a most helpless and harmless animal – a lamb
 - ii. "as if slain"
 - 1. Simply meant the Lamb looked as if he had been slain...because he had been!
 - 2. The word translated "slain" is a word which suggests a violent death – especially victims for sacrifice
 - iii. This was a symbol of the crucified Christ
 - 1. We know this comparison from passages such as Isaiah 53:7, John 1:29 and 1 Peter 1:18,19
 - 2. Note that the Lamb was standing not laying or sitting
 - a. A representation of the risen Christ
 - 3. Notice he also stood between
 - a. A good visual for Christ as the mediator
 - iv. But the Lamb was not helpless – as it might have first appeared
 - 1. He had...
 - a. Seven horns – his omnipotence
 - i. Remember, horns were symbols of strength (Deut 33:17)
 - b. Seven eyes – his omniscience (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech 4:10)
 - i. Also identified as the seven Spirits of God – which we recognize as the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Sent into all the earth
 - i. Most likely a reference to Jesus sending the Holy Spirit to the apostles so they could fulfill the Great Commission

- ii. It would also show that Jesus is omnipresent
- d. The Lamb was all-powerful

26. Verse 7

- a. The Lamb came and took the scroll...
 - i. The tense in the original language indicates this act took place in the past or had already happened.
 - ii. Most likely this refers to the glorification of Jesus after His ascension.
 - iii. The taking of the scroll sets the scene for the opening of the first seal – which takes place beginning with chapter 6.

27. Verse 8

- a. All creation erupts in adoration – starting with those present here before the throne...
 - i. The elders fell down before the Lamb to worship him as they did the One on the throne (4:10)
 - ii. Since only God is to be worshipped, this is another proof text of the deity of Jesus.
- b. The "saints" here are simply another designation of Christians, not sinless ones.

28. Verse 9

- a. An answer to the question – “who is worthy?”
 - i. They sang a new song praising the Lamb as the Redeemer
 - ii. Before the Lamb was slain, it could not be sung
 - 1. Isaiah 42:8-10 referred to a new song that would be sung when the Messiah came
- b. The song
 - i. First they sang of the reason for redemption
 - 1. You were slain
 - 2. Redeemed men to God with your blood
 - ii. Next they sang of the reach of redemption
 - 1. Four terms are used – remember 4 is the number of creation.
 - a. Tribe – every family group
 - b. Tongue – every linguistic group
 - c. People – every social group
 - d. Nation – every ethnic group
 - 2. Jesus died for ALL!
 - 3. These phrases are used throughout Revelation – 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6

29. Verse 10

- a. The song continues
 - i. Next, they sang of the results of redemption
 - 1. The redeemed are made king and priests to God
 - 2. They shall reign on the earth
 - ii. Christians did – and do – reign in several ways:
 - 1. We are the church, which is the kingdom of Christ (Rev 1:6; Matt. 16:18,19)
 - 2. Since God is our Father, we are members of the Royal family (1 Cor. 1:3)
 - 3. Since Christ is presently reigning (Acts 2:33-36; 1 Cor. 15:25) and we are “in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17), we share in His reign.
 - 4. Since we have been saved, no longer does death reign over us.
 - a. We have been given the strength to “reign in life through Jesus Christ) (Rom 5:17; 5:14,21).
 - iii. Perhaps a simpler way to look at it is to view “reigning” as victory!
 - 1. Regardless of who rules or tries to force out God, in Christ, there is always victory.
 - 2. This is often misinterpreted by the pre-millennial viewpoint...
 - 3. Revelation truly shows that true Christians (according to the Word) presently reign, will continue to reign after death and before the Judgment, and will then reign with the Lord throughout eternity. (1:5,6; 20:4-6; & 22:5 respectively).

5:11-14

30. Verse 11

- a. The angelic chorus
 - i. There were many or myriads
 - 1. This can mean ten thousand or countless thousands
 - 2. This is not a literal figure
 - 3. Remember the number 10 indicates completeness
 - a. The multiplication of the number gives a signification that all are present!

31. Verse 12

- a. This verse is often called the “song of agreement” – even though there is no indication they sing these words.

- b. Even though Jesus died for humans, this does not mean the angels are uninterested in the salvation of God's people...they have participated in the work of God's plan from the beginning:
 - i. Matt 1:20; 4:11; 24:31; 28:2; Lk 1:11, 26; 2:9-14; 16:22; Jn 20:12; Acts 8:26; 10:3; 1 Pet. 1:12
- c. Here they honor Jesus for his part in God's plan.
 - i. Four divine attributes are mentioned plus three attitudes for a total of seven – emphasizing Jesus' perfection...
 - 1. Power
 - 2. Riches
 - 3. Wisdom
 - 4. Might – is an expression of power; not the same as power
 - 5. Honor
 - 6. Glory – where we get the word doxology as well which means “a word of glory”
 - 7. Blessing – where we get the word eulogy which means “a good word”; some translations have “praise” here.

32. Verse 13

- a. All creation joins in the song of praise
- b. Two songs were addressed to God in chapter 4
- c. Two songs are addressed to Christ in chapter 5
- d. This song is the fifth and is directed at both God and Christ
 - i. To Him who sits on the throne *and* to the Lamb...
 - 1. 4 qualities similar to some mentioned in verse 12...
 - a. Blessing
 - b. Honor
 - c. Glory
 - d. Dominion – similar to words translated “power” and “might”

33. Verse 14

- a. The four living creatures said “Amen” – the original language indicates they said it continually
- b. And the elders fell down and worshipped Him...