

Week Ten

Come Up Higher (4:1-11)

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!"

The author, John, signals us at the beginning of this chapter that a major shift is taking place with the words “*after these things...*” Chapter one’s most striking feature is the vision of Christ glorified. In chapters two and three, Christ has spoken to the seven churches of Asia. In chapters four to twenty-two we look into the future of the very end of this age and of the one to come. The chart on page 52 indicates that time frame to be seven years followed by one thousand years (a millennium), and then eternity.

Lord,

As we look into your plans for ending this age and beginning the Millennial kingdom, we ask you to help us to understand things from your perspective. Show us how to worship you and how to live for you when the days are darkest.

Amen

^{4:1}After these things I looked, and there was a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said:

“Come up here so that I can show you what must happen after these things.”

^{4:2}Immediately I was in the Spirit, and a throne was standing in heaven with someone seated on it! ³And the one seated on it was like jasper and carnelian in appearance, and a rainbow looking like it was made of emerald encircled the throne. ⁴In a circle

around the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on those thrones were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white clothing and had golden crowns on their heads. ⁵From the throne came out flashes of lightning and roaring and crashes of thunder. Seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God, were burning in front of the throne ⁶and in front of the throne was something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

In the middle of the throne and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ^{4:7}The first living creature was like a lion, the second creature like an ox, the third creature had a face like a man's, and the fourth creature looked like an eagle flying. ⁸Each one of the four living creatures had six wings and was full of eyes all around and inside. They never rest day or night, saying:

"Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God, the All-Powerful,

Who was and who is, and who is still to come!"

Monday ^{4:9}And whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders throw themselves to the ground before the one who sits on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever, and they offer their crowns before his throne, saying:

^{4:11}"You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
since you created all things,
and because of your will they existed and were
created!"

As we begin reading chapter 4 it is a good thing to remind ourselves of where John actually is while he sees this vision (1:9). He has been exiled by the Roman authorities to the island of Patmos separated from his Christian brethren in the churches of Asia. His

influence may have been restricted for a time, but God's people are not limited by man's restrictions from receiving spiritual insight.

The phrase "*after these things*" occurs twice in 4:1. Does it mean the same thing each time it is used?

The first thing John sees as an open door which is reminiscent of his message to the church of Philadelphia (3:7-8) and also with his comment to the Laodiceans (3: 20). Where is this door located and what is its significance?

John is required to ascend into heaven in order to give him and us heavenly perspective on the earthly events which are to take place at the end of the age. In the midst of the mire of the world it is necessary for us to see things as they really are instead of how they merely appear to be (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

John indicates that his entrance into heaven was not physical, but spiritual by the statement, "*I was in the spirit*" (4:2; compare 1:10). It is important to remember that what he sees there is God's timeless insight into events that are worked out in time. Dr. Gregory Beale, in his commentary says,

Being ushered into the spiritual, timeless dimension of God's heavenly council means that the time of the events that John sees in vision may be difficult to determine precisely. Some of the symbols may be descriptive symbolism in that they portray what has taken place up to the present. Or they may contain determinative symbolism predicting what will come to pass. Only careful interpretation can discern which parts are descriptive and which are determinative, and sometimes there may be ambiguity.¹

We need to be aware that not everything we are read about in chapters 4-22 deal with future events. Some describe things which of

G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation : A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 319.

already happen. For example, the birth of Christ has already occurred (12:5). Others, such as the character of Babylon (17-18) is ongoing throughout this age. While others definitely deal with events which are yet future (20:11-15). Pay careful attention to those things which indicate time elements as you read these chapters, but be aware that a knowledge of the rest of the Bible and of history will be an aid to interpretation.

List seven things John saw in heaven (2-6) and try to identify them. Don't worry if you can't identify them all right now.

<u>John Saw</u>	<u>Which is</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

Those who had heard or read the first chapter of Ezekiel would have little difficulty identifying the occupant of the throne as the Lord in his glory (Ezekiel 1:28).

Reflecting on John's situation and that of the seven churches, how do you think they would have received the news that God was sitting on his throne in heaven?

Have you ever needed the assurance of a reminder that, "there is a throne in heaven and someone was seated on it?" The world of these seven churches seemed 'out of control' or at least that the most wicked of people were in charge. Trusted neighbors had turned against them

and their enemies were winning the fight to oppress them and even to wipe out the church. It was a battle that was going to continue for generations and sometimes would even be worse. John's writing in chapters 5-18 point out that no matter how bad it was now, tribulation was going to increase by magnitudes of orders. How good to know that God is seated upon His throne, working out His plan to bring us all together in victory!

The appearance of God One sitting on the throne is literally said to resemble the gem stones, *jasper* and *carnelian*. Jasper comes in a variety of colors (red, green, yellow, brown, or white) and carnelian (Sard) occurs most commonly as a milky brown color, but can be blue, green, and orange-red). Likely what is pictured here is green and red colors.

How does this description compare with the one found in Ezekiel 1:27?

What can you discern about the "twenty-four elders?"

What is indicated by the storm (4:5; compare 8:5; 11:19; 16:18)?

To identify the "sea" we need to consider the meaning and use of the term in the Old Testament (4:6). How is the word used in the following references?

_____ Tell the Israelites that they must turn and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you are to camp by the sea before Baal Zephon opposite it. (Exodus 14:2)

_____ Then he moved from there to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and worshiped the LORD. (Genesis 12:8)

_____ He also made the large bronze basin called “The Sea.” It measured 15 feet from rim to rim, was circular in shape, and stood seven-and-a-half feet high. Its circumference was 45 feet. (1 Kings 7:23)

Which of these three meanings do you think most closely fits the context of Revelation 4? Why?

Wednesday

With the exception of chapter 15, all the other references to “sea” seem to indicate a body of water. It is likely that here it is intended to recall the great basin of water in the Tabernacle and later in Solomon’s Temple (Exodus 30:18; compare 25:40 and Ezekiel 1:22)

Who or what are the “four living creatures” (4:7-8a, compare with Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1)?

Thursday

	Revelation 4:6-8	Isaiah 6:1-7	Ezekiel 1:5-14
Number	4		
Wings	6		
Location	<i>Throne</i>		
Eyes	<i>Full of Eyes</i>		
Faces	<i>Lion, Ox, Man, Eagle</i>		

What *glory, honor, and thanks* are they giving (4:8b-9)?

The twenty-four elders are paralleled in the Old Testament division of the priesthood into twenty-four orders who would each serve a turn in the temple (1 Chronicles 24). It is possible the elders are the

patriarchs the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles the church representing all of the people of God.

What are the twenty-four elders doing in heaven (4:10)?

The crowns are those given to the victors of the games in recognition of overcoming their opponents. They are clothed in the white garments indicative of purity from the sins of the world.

Friday

Why do you think the elders “offer their crowns before his throne?”

From your study so far, what seems to be the dominant activity of heaven?

The primary focus of this chapter has been on worship. Take today to review and think about what worship consists of, why it is important, and what our role or place in it should be. Write your thoughts in the space below:

Week Eleven

Behold the Lamb (5:1-14)

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be praise, honor, glory, and ruling power forever and ever!”

^{5:1}Then I saw in the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne a scroll written on the front and back and sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a powerful angel proclaiming in a loud voice:

“Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?”

³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it. ⁴So I began weeping bitterly because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me,

“Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered; thus he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

^{5:6}Then I saw standing in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the middle of the elders, a Lamb that appeared to have been killed. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷Then he came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne, ⁸and when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders threw themselves to the ground before the Lamb. Each of them had a harp and golden bowls full of incense (which are the prayers of the saints). ⁹They were singing a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals because you were killed,
and at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God
persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

¹⁰You have appointed them as a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels in a circle around the throne, as well as the living creatures and the elders. Their number was ten thousand times ten thousand – thousands times thousands – 12 all of whom were singing in a loud voice:

“Worthy is the lamb who was killed
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and praise!”

Monday 5:13 Then I heard every creature – in heaven, on earth, under the earth, in the sea, and all that is in them – singing:

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise, honor, glory, and ruling power forever and
ever!”

5:14 And the four living creatures were saying “Amen,” and the elders threw themselves to the ground and worshiped.

The focus of our study today is to examine the scroll (*biblion*) in the right hand of the Father. The name, *biblion*, comes from the Egyptian word for *papyrus*. Strips of bark from papyri reeds were glued together vertically and horizontally to form writing paper.

What prominent features of this scroll are mentioned?

Normally the writing in Greek and in Hebrew was done on the horizontal strips (Greek: left to right; Hebrew: right to left). Why would scrolls not normally have writing on the back where the vertical strips were?

Compare this sealed scroll with other biblical references to sealing scrolls (*2 Kings 21:8; Isaiah 29:11; Jeremiah 32:10-11, 14, 44; Ezekiel 2:10; Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9*).

What do you learn about the purpose of sealing such a scroll and about opening them?

Why is opening the book conditioned upon “worthiness?”

How is that worthiness secured?

In brief, what are the seven contents of the sealed scroll?

1. _____ (6:1-2)
2. _____ (6:3-4)
3. _____ (6:5-6)
- Tuesday 4. _____ (6:7-8)
5. _____ (6:9-11)
6. _____ (6:12-17)
7. _____ (8:1-6)

From this study, what do you conclude is the purpose of the “book” (“scroll”)?

Today’s study focuses on the one who is able to open the scroll and bring about the end of this age and establish the kingdom of the next age. It is He who is the focus of our worship in this chapter. What is the point of the angel’s exhaustive search in 5:3?

Why do you think John began to “weep greatly” (5:4)?

What do the titles “*the Lion from the tribe of Judah*” and the “*the Root of David*” mean (5:5; see Genesis 49:9-10; 2 Samuel 7:14-16; Isaiah 11:1,10; Revelation 22:16)?

What is the biblical background of the “Lamb” (5:6; Genesis 22:8; Exodus 12:3,13; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29,36)?

What is worth noting about the phrase “standing, as if slain” (compare with 1 John 3:12; Revelation 5:9; 18:24 and with the parallel in Revelation 13:3 and 13:8)?

Wednesday

What is signified by the “seven horns”? (1 Samuel 2:1; 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2; Daniel 7:24)

What does John state as the meaning of the “seven eyes” (Zechariah 4:10; Isaiah 11:2-4)?

Having looked at the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who is the Lamb slain, we now see Him do something that no one else in heaven or earth or under the earth was able to do. What is it (5:7)?

What is the response to this action on Christ’s part (5:8-14)?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

What does each elder have (5:8)?

1. _____
2. _____

The “*harp*” is a handheld instrument like a *lyre*. It is referred to in Psalm 33:2 and 98:5. What is its use in those passages?

The bowls full of incense are identified by John as the prayers of the saints (5:8; Psalm 141:2; Luke 1:10). How do these two tools music and prayer serve the believer in the Christian life?

Thursday

In the new song the Lamb receives honor as being worthy in view of four things. What are these four things and why are they significant (5:9-10)?

The worship scene in heaven is joined by “ten thousand times ten thousands” which would be literally 100 million angels, but the addition of the phrase “thousands of thousands” indicates that he wasn’t counting. Instead John indicates that the number was HUGE (5:11).

In 5:12 the angels use seven expressions (the perfect number is probably significant) to indicate the wonder of the Lamb.

What are the seven words used to praise the Lamb?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Which is the most meaningful to you? Why?

Friday

The passage closes with praise to the Father and the Son (5:13-14). Who is involved in this praise and why is that significant (see Romans 8:22)?

As we conclude our study this week, we want to think back over worship as we have seen it in chapters four and five. Does the posture of worship matter? Why or why not?

What activities are indicated by 'worship'?

After our introduction to the dire situation of the seven churches in chapters 1-3, these two chapters pull back the veil and let suffering people glimpse what is going on in heaven around God's throne. Far from forgetting about persecution, God has already been working through Christ the Lamb to begin and finish our salvation. While we do suffer (and it will get worse), there is coming a time when the seals will be broken and the end of this age will come ushering in the Millennial Kingdom.