

Revelation 4-5

1. Introduction

- a. Revelation 4:1 marks the third major division of the book of Revelation.
- b. Revelation 4-11 is a prophecy about God's judgment on the first great enemy of the Church: Apostate Judaism.
- c. Revelation 12-19 is a prophecy about God's judgment on the second great enemy of the Church: Imperial Rome.
- d. Revelation 20-22 is about the triumph of Christ and His Church and the restoration of all things.

2. God's Throne in Heaven (4:1-3)

- a. Jesus brings John to heaven in a vision so that John can see what is about to happen from God's perspective (4:1).
 - i. Contrary to dispensationalism, this is not talking about a pre-tribulation rapture!
- b. Heaven is where God dwells and *rules*. It is His throne room.
- c. The description of God's radiant glory and beauty is like what we find in Ezekiel 1:26-28.
- d. The mention of the rainbow reminds us of God's gracious covenant mercy.

3. The Groups Surrounding God's Throne (4:4-7)

- a. Twenty-Four Elders (4:4-6a)
 - i. This group probably represents the glorified Church.
 - ii. The number 24 may come from 12 tribes and 12 apostles (Revelation 21:12, 14).
 - iii. It is probably better to take it as a reference to David's division of the priesthood into 24 divisions (1 Chronicles 24).
 - iv. They are clothed in white, have golden crowns, and sit on 24 thrones.
 - v. Later, we also see that they hold harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8).
- b. Four Living Creatures (4:6b-8)
 - i. These living creatures resemble earlier Old Testament depictions of cherubim and seraphim (Isaiah 6:2-3; Ezekiel 1:10, 18).

- ii. In the Old Testament, these living creatures appear as the guardians and bearers of God's chariot throne (Ezek. 1).
- iii. In some sense, these living creatures appear to represent the entire created order.
 - 1. The symbolic use of "Four"- We might think of the four corners of the earth or the four winds or the four cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west.
 - 2. The creatures themselves seem to indicate this:
 - a. Lion- king of the wild animals
 - b. Ox- king of the domesticated animals
 - c. Man- king of creation
 - d. Eagle- king of the sky

4. The Worship of God in Heaven (4:8-11)

- a. The worship of heaven is *responsive* between the living creatures and the elders.
- b. The living creatures praise God for **His holiness** (4:8).
 - i. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"
- c. The elders respond by casting down their crowns and praising God for **His work of creation** (4:9-11).
 - i. "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created."

5. Who is Worthy to Take the Scroll? (5:1-5)

- a. God the Father sits on the throne with a seven-sealed scroll (5:1).
 - i. What is the seven-sealed scroll?
 - ii. The fact that this scroll is "written within and on the back" is another reference to Ezekiel.
 - 1. Ezekiel 2:8-10
 - 2. This is God's plan of judgment on Israel!
 - iii. When these seals are opened, we will see judgments unleashed on Apostate Israel (Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1-5; Compare these judgments with

what Jesus foretold would happen to Israel in that generation in Matthew 24:1-35).

- b. No one in heaven is worthy to open the scroll (5:2-4).
 - i. Why might this make John sad?
 - 1. The text doesn't explicitly say, but perhaps, like the martyred saints in Revelation 6:9-11, John longs for God to judge the Church's enemies and vindicate His people!
 - c. **Jesus is the only One who is worthy to take the scroll! (5:5)**
 - i. Steve Gregg: "The seven-sealed book (5:1) is God's sentence against Jerusalem, and the subsequent breaking of the first six seals depicts the Jewish crisis of AD 66-70: the war between the Jews and Rome, issuing in utter destruction of the Jewish capital, state, and religious system."
 - ii. Steve Gregg: "John has entered the courtroom at the end of the trial, just in time to hear the sentence delivered—if only one can be found worthy to execute it! Judgment is due, but only He who is without sin may 'first cast a stone at her.' Initially, no one is found to qualify, resulting in great grief for John, since this would mean that the martyrs' blood must go unavenged."
 - iii. The description of Christ in 5:5 highlights Christ as the conquering King from the line of David!
6. **Worthy is the Lamb! (5:6-14)**
- a. Christ is a lion (5:5), but he is also a lamb! (5:6)
 - i. "Standing as though it had been slain" - death and resurrection!
 - ii. Seven horns- Perfect power
 - iii. Seven eyes, which are the seven spirits- Giver of the Holy Spirit to the Church throughout the earth
 - b. **When Christ takes the scroll, heaven erupts in worship! (5:7-14)**
 - i. The elders and living creatures prostrate themselves before the Lamb and worship Him!
 - 1. Notice that we are told that the elders have golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints (5:8).
 - a. What might this teach us about prayer?

- ii. They sing a “new song” (5:9).
 - 1. They were singing the “old song” of God’s holiness (4:8) and creative power (4:11), but now they are singing the new song of Christ’s redeeming work.
- iii. Consider what this teaches us about our redemption (5:9-10).
 - 1. Christ’s redemption is **costly**.
 - a. Christ’s blood was the payment!
 - 2. Christ’s redemption is **liberating**.
 - a. “Ransomed” means to pay the price to set a slave free from captivity.
 - 3. Christ’s redemption is **definitive**.
 - a. He redeemed a particular people.
 - 4. Christ’s redemption is **universal**.
 - a. The people God redeemed are from every tribe and language and people and nation.
 - 5. Christ’s redemption is **effective**.
 - a. He made us a kingdom and priests to our God, and we *shall* reign on the earth.
- iv. The worship continues to be directed to Christ, the Lamb of God, who worthy to receive the highest praise (5:11-14).