

Revelation 4-5

...I will shew thee things which must be hereafter...

ΜΕΤΆ ΤΑΥΤΑ

Outline of Chapter 4:

- I. JOHN IS CALLED UP TO HEAVEN (v. 1)
- II. JOHN SEES GOD'S THRONE (vv. 2-3)
- III. THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (v. 4)
- IV. THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD (v. 5)
- V. THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES (vv. 6-8)
- VI. THE WORSHIP OF THE LIVING CREATURES AND THE ELDERS (vv. 9-11)



- I. JOHN IS CALLED UP TO HEAVEN (v. 1)
 - A. In Chapter 1:19 we are given a division of the book of Revelation. There are three parts. 1. The things that were (the vision that John saw), 2. the things that are (Chapter 2-3, the 7 historical churches in Asia and the 7 periods of time in Church history in it's entirety that each of the 7 churches represented) and, 3. that which shall be hereafter (Chapter 4 begins this section of Revelation which describes to us the things which shall be after the church age).
 - B. Chapter 4 begins with the words "after these things". What things? After the things of the church. Chapters 2-3 discuss the things of the church, so after these things. We are moving on into the future into a period that we have not yet arrived at historically. The church age, that began on the day of Pentecost, will be until the church is removed from the earth in the rapture and then shall happen

all that John is going to describe to us in the these later chapters of Revelation.

C. "a door was open in heaven" v. 1

1. In this verse it is possible that there is an indication of the rapture of the church. The experience that John had himself is perhaps a strong picture to us of the rapture of the church. Notice the wording that he uses...

- a) The church of Philadelphia was told by Jesus that they would have an open door that no man could shut. We mentioned that this was most-likely referring to an open door of evangelism but we did not mention that this could be an open door to escape the judgment that will come to try all those "that dwell upon the earth".
- b) The Church of Philadelphia represents that faithful church which kept the word of God. It is mentioned in the end of the letter to Philadelphia that for their faithfulness Jesus will keep them from the hour of temptation which is to try them that dwell upon the earth. The true church will not be here for that time of temptation which is to try all the earth-dwellers.

D. "...and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet talking with me..."

1. This sounds much like other rapture passages in the Bible

a) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with *the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

b) 1 Corinthians 15:52

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound*, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

- (1) Perhaps John's experience doesn't speak to us of the rapture of the church but no one can deny that there is a parallel to be noticed between this verse and other rapture passages in the Bible.

E. "...Come up hither..."

1. "Though there is no authority for connecting the rapture with this expression, there does seem to be a typical representation of the order of events, namely, the church age first, then the rapture, then the church in heaven. Though the rapture is mentioned in letters to two of the churches (cf. 2:25; 3:11), the rapture as a doctrine is not a part of the prophetic foreview of the book of Revelation. This is in keeping with the fact that the book as a whole is not occupied primarily with God's program for the church."
2. From the end of chapter 3 until chapter 22:16 the church is nowhere mentioned in the book of Revelation save only when the church is referred to as the bride of the lamb in chapter 19:7. That indicates to us very strongly that the things in Revelation from this point on (for the most part) do not have an application to the church.
3. One of the big problems in interpreting this book is trying to fit the church in a place that it truly isn't suppose to be.

II. JOHN SEES GOD'S THRONE (vv. 2-3)

A. "...a throne was set in heaven..."

1. The first thing John sees in heaven is the throne of God. There is a throne set in heaven apart from and more glorious and powerful than any and all earthly thrones or powers that be. God alone is sovereign and the fact that his throne is "set" in heaven should give us great comfort when we see the powers in this world causing so much chaos.

B. "...like a jasper and a sardine stone..."

1. Representing the glory and majesty of God sitting upon His throne.

III. THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (v. 4)

A. "...And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting..."

1. 24 thrones and 24 elders seated upon those thrones...this no doubt is a reference to the church. Or these elders are representative of the church, the body of Christ, those that had been redeemed. They are individual men and this we can see in verses 5:5 and 7:13 where they speak as individual men. However collectively these twenty-four elders represent a greater whole, the body of Christ.

2. We don't know *who* exactly these twenty-four men are but we do know who or what they represent viz. the church.
3. We know also what they are not viz. angels. For several reasons they can't be angels. Henry Morris has handled this verse in an interesting way and gives six reasons why these here can't be angelic beings.
 - (1) "although there are principalities and powers in the angelic hierarchy, there can be no "elders," since all angels are of the same age, created probably on the first day of creation;
 - (2) the term "elder" is always used elsewhere in the Bible only of men;
 - (3) elders are always chosen representatives and leaders of the people, both in Israel and in the church;
 - (4) there are no elders in the visions of God's throne in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1-10, in consequence of the fact that prior to the cross the spirits of all the redeemed were still confined to hades;
 - (5) the elders were wearing white raiment (as promised to overcoming believers in Revelation 3:5) and victors' crowns (Greek *stephanos*, "wreath," as also promised to overcomers in Revelation 2:10 and 3:11); angels, being "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14) are never described in the Bible as wearing crowns of any kind;
 - (6) in Revelation 5:8, 9, these elders sing a song of praise to the Lamb who has redeemed them by His blood."¹

B. "... I saw four and twenty elders sitting..."

1. They were seated on thrones

a) 1 Peter 2:9 Peter writes the church calling all believers a "royal priesthood"

"But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:"

b) Revelation 1:6

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (a kingdom of priests)

¹ Henry Morris, The Revelation Record, p. 87

- (1) The twenty-four are representative of the church. So the church is in heaven with John when he arrives there.

C. "...clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold..."

1. These white garments speak of the righteousness of Jesus. His righteousness has been imputed to all believers and so the elders which are the church wear white raiment.
2. The crowns mentioned here speak of the rewards of the believer. The word for crown here is *stephanos* in the Greek and not *diadem*. *Diadem* is a ruler's crown or a crown of government and authority. *Stephanos* is victors crown that one would wear in the greek games if he won a race. Usually made of leaves.
3. "It is significant that the passage states the twenty-four elders already have their crown of gold as victors. If this passage is regarded as chronologically before the tribulation which succeeding chapters unfold, it would seem to eliminate the angels, as at this point they have not been judged and rewarded since their judgment seems to come later. For the same reason the elders do not seem to be a proper representation of Israel, for Israel's judgment also seems to come at the end of the tribulation, not before. Only the church which is raptured before chapter 4 is properly complete in heaven and eligible for reward at the judgment seat of Christ. In that case, the crowns of gold on the heads of the twenty-four elders would be fitting at this point and would seem to confirm the idea that these may be representative of the church in glory." ²

IV. THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD (v. 5)

A. "...seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

1. The seven spirits are to be understood as the sevenfold way in which the Holy Spirit is revealed.
2. "Ordinarily the Holy Spirit is not humanly visible unless embodied in some way...The seven lamps of fire therefore are the means by which John is informed of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The number seven is characteristic of the perfection of the Spirit and is in keeping with the revelation of Isaiah 11:2-3."³

² John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 106-107

³John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 108

V. THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES (vv. 6-8)

A. "...And before the throne [there was] a sea of glass like unto crystal..."

1. This is the antitype of the laver in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:18-21) and the sea in the temple (2 Chronicles 4:2-6). Unlike the water in the laver and sea which obviously was liquid and used for washing this was crystal, hard and immovable. Here in the heavenly temple the priests (the 24 elders) needed not to wash for they had already been washed and could walk directly (over the crystal sea) to the throne of God and into the presence of the Lord.

B. "...and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind."

1. "beasts" is *zoon* in Greek, living creatures.
2. Isaiah 6:1-3 , John saw what Isaiah saw, the throne of God and there were seraphim that John saw just as Isaiah saw.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory."

3. "The word seraphim means "fiery ones" and they are probably the same...as cherubim...Ezekiel describes the cherubim thus: "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps..."⁴
4. The seraphim proclaim the holiness of God. The pureness of God that in him there is no darkness at all. They proclaim the holiness of God because it will be God in his holiness that will judge this wicked world which has transgressed his commandments and fallen so short of His holiness. He is holy and therefore he will judge and the rest of this book is going to layout for us the judgments of God which are to come.
5. Rebellion is an affront to God and his holiness and all rebellion will be judged one day. The most common attribute of God talked about today is love. But because he is perfect love he is capable of perfect hatred. God hates sin. He hates it so much that he was willing to die so that sin and the power thereof could be destroyed.

⁴ Henry Morris, The Revelation Record, p.90

VI. THE WORSHIP OF THE LIVING CREATURES AND THE ELDERS (vv. 9-11)

A. "...The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne..."

1. We, as represented by these twenty-four elders will be casting our crowns at the saviors feet. Our crowns are only a result of His grace and as an act of worship we will cast these down before him.

B. "...Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created..."

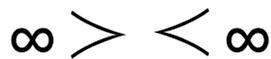
1. The world is going to be surprised. He is who he said he is—the creator of the heavens and the earth.

2. We as Christians should never stumble at the account of creation that has been given to us in Genesis. If God is God then why are we questioning the Lord so much in this topic. God is great enough and that is all we need to know. Just like Paul asked Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" What is your concept of God. If your concept of God is proper then none of the things in the Bible that are supernatural will be easily believable.

3. All that exists is because he willed it to be so and we exist for his good pleasure. Every one that lives out of a relationship with God is living outside of that for which they were created. We were created to have a relationship with the Lord.

Outline of Chapter 5:

- I. THE SEALED BOOK IN THE HAND OF GOD (vv. 1-4)
- II. THE LAMB HAS PREVAILED TO OPEN THE BOOK (vv. 5-7)
- III. THE LIVING CREATURES AND TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS WORSHIP THE LAMB (vv. 8-10)
- IV. THE ANGELS JOIN IN WORSHIP (vv. 11-12)
- V. THE WHOLE CREATION JOINS IN WORSHIP (vv. 13-14)



- I. THE SEALED BOOK IN THE HAND OF GOD (vv. 1-4)
 - A. "...I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals..."
 - 1. What is this scroll? Jeremiah chapter 32 shows us a scroll that was a title deed to a piece of property from Jeremiah's uncle in the land of Benjamin. In that chapter there was actually one sealed scroll and one open scroll. The open one no doubt contained instructions as to who was eligible to open the sealed scroll and execute the deed within. Here in Revelation we don't see two scrolls, rather we see only one. The scroll in Revelation however had writing on the backside and within. So, just as the one open scroll in Jeremiah's day declared who was worthy to open the sealed scroll so the writing on the backside of this scroll in Revelation declared the same.
 - 2. This scroll in the hand of God is probably the title deed to the planet earth itself.
 - 3. God created the world and then gave dominion to man to rule over that which he created. But man rebelled against God and submitted himself to satan. In submitting himself to satan he forfeited the dominion that was given to him from God and that he once enjoyed over to satan. Currently satan is the god of this world... "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:4) Satan himself referring "all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of men" said to Jesus

“All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). Jesus rebuked satan by saying “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10). But Jesus never disputed those things which satan claimed to have because that was actually the case. Satan is truly the “god of this world”. The world is still under the direct authority of satan because man rebelled against God and gave authority over to satan.

4. “Jesus at the cross has destroyed the power of satan but one day he will manifestly redeem to himself this world and all power and authority on it by setting up His throne and rule here on earth.

B. “And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much...”

1. Because John saw no one who could bring this world back under the authority of man he wept uncontrollably.

II. THE LAMB HAS PREVAILED TO OPEN THE BOOK (vv. 5-7)

A. “...the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book...”

1. Genesis 49:8-10 is being fulfilled in this scene

“Judah, thou [art he] whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand [shall be] in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah [is] a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him [shall] the gathering of the people [be].”

2. Jesus is not only a descendent of king David but he is the root of David. David came from or had his being from the Lord Jesus and Jesus eventually as he became a man and stepped into time became the descendent of David. He is the root and the offspring of David.

B. “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain”

1. Jesus is seen as one alive yet at the same time one that had been slain. This passage tells us that our Lord still bares the marks of the cross upon him.

2. Isaiah 49:15, the Lord will never forget us

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion

on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.
Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of [my] hands;”

III. THE LIVING CREATURES AND TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS WORSHIP THE LAMB (vv. 8-10)

- A. “...a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”
1. Only the church can sing a song like this. Not angels. The church alone can say that from every kindred, tongue, people and nation thou hast redeemed us.
 2. The church is in heaven during the tribulation period not on earth. They are before the throne singing this new song to the one who is worthy.
- B. “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”
1. We will be the ones in power ruling and reigning one day. The world may mock us today but we will not be the ones getting judged in the final analysis. God will vindicate us and we will not have walked, worshiped, served, praised, obeyed and laid down our lives in vain. In the end only those that reject Christ will have great regret.

IV. THE ANGELS JOIN IN WORSHIP (vv. 11-12)

- A. “...and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands...”
1. This literally says “myriads times myriads and thousands of thousands.” It is to speak of an innumerable company.

V. THE WHOLE CREATION JOINS IN WORSHIP (v. 13-14)

- A. “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them...”
1. Romans 8:22

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

2. Luke 19:39-40

“And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”

3. Philippians 2:8-10 Even those that are obstinate rejecters of God and His Christ will one day praise the matchless name of Jesus!

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;”

4. The application is clear, bow down now because you will one day bow any way! Will you participate in the judgment that is to come or the choir which eternally sings to the one who is worthy to receive all worship, honor and praise?