

The Throne of God

Rev. 4

8/5/2020

V1. "I looked...I heard": What a precious truth is being presented to us. This is teaching us that God intends for John to be blessed to view, as a program on a television, the events going on around the very throng of God.

Spurgeon: "It is very little that we can know of the future state, but we may be quite sure that we know as much as is good for us. We ought to be as content with that which is not revealed as with that which is. If God wills us not to know, we ought to be satisfied not to know. Depend on it, He has told us all about Him that is necessary to bring us there, and if He had revealed more, it would have served rather for the gratification of our curiosity than for the increase of our grace."

Chapters 4 and 5 record glimpses into Christ's glory. Here we see into the throne room of heaven. God is on the throne and orchestrating all the events that John will record. The world is not spinning out of control; the God of creation will carry out His plans as Christ initiates the final battle with the forces of evil. It appears the design is to show us heaven before showing us earth so we will not be frightened by future events.

"First voice...trumpet": The first command he hears after the sight of the open door is one that signals him to come up and see. Note: We too must wait on the call to come up. We know from 1:10 that this is Jesus.

"Talking with me": John is the disciple "whom Jesus loved". He becomes the last prophet on Earth who is chosen to finish the prophecies of Ezekiel 1 and Isa. 6.

"Come up": The vision changing in the Spirit to view a heavenly throne room and what is there.

"Things which must be heard after": The original is "meta tauta" denoting a different scene and subject occurring in a future period. It was future at the writing of this book and is still future in the sense the church is still on this earth at the time of this study.

V2. "Immediately": Denoting an action which is at once. Meaning to go straightway into a matter or subject.

"In the Spirit": This is stating that the Spirit, by the design of God, is controlling John as to what he would be viewing. The things he was able to understand were the very representation of how everything would occur on this earth and in heaven. It would make clear what God and Jesus will allow and interact with until the end of time as we know it.

"Throne set in heaven": This is the center of attraction. It is indicating a placed seat. This is a throne of grace and of judgment. Psa. 11:4 "Lord's throne is in heaven." The throne is a symbol of government and power. We will be examining angels, the twenty and four elders, and beasts (Living Creatures) all of which will have positions around this set throne but lower than it.

"One sat on the throne": There is here no direct description so as no way a picture or image could be formed to prevent false worship. There is in this the sense of reverence even to the point of lack of mentioning directly who is seated there.

V3. "And He that sat": There is no form declared. There is the appearance of brightness which is describing His splendor, holiness, and purity.

Deut. 4:12 "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no simulation."

"Like a jasper": (holiness); The last stone on the breastplate of the high priest. Exod. 28:20. The first stone on the foundation and wall of the "New Jerusalem" Rev. 21:18-19. This is a primarily purple color. It shows the glorious perfections of God. A royal robe.

"A sardine stone": (wrath); The sixth stone in the foundation of New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:20. The first stone in the breastplate of the high priest. It signifies the justice of God who can either pardon or punish.

"Rainbow": God puts a "bow" in the sky showing His covenant to not destroy the Earth again by water. Gen. 9:13-15. It is the emblem of peace. It appears after the storm has passed.

“In sight emerald”: (mercy); dominated by green, Shows God’s goodness displayed to His creation Earth.

V4. “Round about”: This is describing the relationship to God.

“Four and twenty elders”: This becomes the representation of the saints of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We have the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles. These are the representatives of all the saints. We find the 12 tribes of Israel names on the 12 gates of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:12 and the 12 apostles’ names on the 12 foundations of the City in Rev. 21:14. In Rev. 15:3 we find both the “song of Moses” (O T) and the “song of the Lamb” (N T) being sung unto the “King of saints”.

These “elders” are not a heavenly and unfallen order of beings, like the angels or “living creatures” that surround the Throne. They are the representatives of redeemed mankind. The name elder is never applied to angels. Neither do angels have “crowns” and sit on “thrones”. That this group represents all those saved by the blood of Jesus will become clear as we study their position, dress, and song.

“Clothed in white raiment”: This symbolizes the righteousness of the saints, purity. This is the sanctified bride.

“Crowns”: “The incorruptible crown” I Cor. 9:25-27; “The crown of life” Rev. 2:10; “The crown of Glory” I Pet. 5:2-4; “The crown of righteousness” II Tim. 4:8; and “The crown of rejoicing” I Thess. 2:19-20. Spurgeon: “There will be no crowns in heaven for those who bore no crosses while on earth.”

V5. “Lightnings and thunderings”: This is always the indication of a severe storm in this area of the world. The image thus understood was that some sort of a storm was in fact coming. Mount Sinai. Exod. 19:16.

“Voices”: This speaks of directed judgment warned by multiple voices echoing and re-echoing on every side.

“Seven lamps of fire before”: Seven is always the number of perfection. These burning lamps are constantly shining. They are illuminating the whole scene.

“Seven Spirits of God”: The complete work of the Spirit imparting light, giving consolation, and creating a new heart thus sanctifying the soul. This scene shows us that in the midst of whatever else may be developing the Spirit of God is present, shedding constant light and undistributed by anything else.

V6. “Before”: The language is denoting position. The four and twenty elders are sitting a little before the throne.

“Sea of glass”: This denotes its appearance and not the material of which it is made. This sea is before the throne of God is another indication that the emphasis is not on mercy but on judgment. This sea represents the holiness and righteousness of God.

We are told in I Thess. 3:13: “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” This placid sea indicates the position of rest to which the church has come. No longer is she the victim of the storms of life. No longer is she out there on the tossing sea. J. Vernon McGee.

In the temple there was a great vessel of brass filled with water in which the priest had to sanctify himself before doing service. I Kings 7:23 tells us it was a molten sea. The church needed this sea for purification in this laver. It is the blood of Christ. Exod. 24:10: “under his feet as it were a paved work of stone and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.”

“Crystal”: congealed as ice, clear as. Denotes the vastness of God’s empire. An administration that is undisturbed and unruffled.

“Midst”: intermingled with, beneath the center of it. Under it so that it rested on them. These four living beings are supporting the throne of God.

“Round about”: While under the throne their faces were turned outward so that they could be seen from every direction while approaching the throne.

“Four beasts”: “Beasts” should be translated “Living Creatures”. The word translated here is (Zoon), is not the same as the one translated “beast” (Therion) in chapters eleven, thirteen, and seventeen. The word in those chapters means a “wild untamed animal”. They are not angelic beings, for they are distinguished from the angels, who are mentioned as a class by themselves in Rev. 5:11. Neither are

they representative of redeemed human beings, for they do not join in the Redemption Song. (Rev. 5:8-10).

The “Four Living Creatures” are not in the same class with the “Elders” for they have no “thrones”, “crowns”, or “golden vials”. They are the “Guardians” of the Throne of God, and accompany it wherever it goes. Ezek. 1:24-28. They are four in number, which is the “earth number”, and therefore have something to do with the earth. That is, they are interested in the “re-genesis” of the earth to its former glory before the Fall. They have eyes before and behind and within, which represents their intelligence and spiritual insight of things past, present, and to come, and they are tireless in their service, for they rest not day nor night, saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

The first time the “Living Creatures” are mentioned in the Bible is in Gen. 3:24, where they are called “Cherubim”, but are not described. They were placed at the entrance to the “Garden of Eden” to prevent the re-entrance of Adam and Eve, and to keep the way of the “Tree of Life”. It would appear as if at the place they were stationed there was a Tabernacle, a place of worship to which Cain and Able resorted to make their offerings, and that it was from there that Cain went out from the “Presence of the Lord”. Gen. 4:16.

When Moses was given on the Holy Mount the pattern of the Tabernacle, he was instructed to make the “Ark of the Covenant” with two Cherubim upon it. Exod. 25:10-22. These Cherubim were guardians of the “Mercy Seat”, or the place of God’s “Presence”, when He in His “Shekinah Glory” visited the Tabernacle. But it not until Ezekiel had his vision of the Cherubim (Ezek. 1:1-28, 10:1-22), that we have a description of what they are like.

Ezekiel describes them as having the likeness of a man, with 4 faces, and 4 wings, and feet like a “calf’s feet”, and hands like a man’s hand under their wings on their 4 sides. Their 4 faces were different. The front face was that of a “Man”, the right face was that of a “Lion”, the left side face was that of an “Ox”, and the rear face was that of an “Eagle”, and their whole body, back, hands, and wings, were full of eyes round about. Ezek. 10:12. In John’s Vision of the “Cherubim” or “Living Creatures” they are described as “like animals”, the first was like a “Lion”, the second like a “Calf”, or a young Ox, the third had the face of a “Man”, and the fourth was like a “Flying Eagle”. John’s “Living Creatures” had 6 wings, while Ezekiel’s “Cherubim” had only 4. In Ezekiel’s vision, the “Cherubim”, or “Living Creatures”, were accompanied by the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 1:12) and traveled on wheels, which shows that they were on some tour or mission, attended by the Lord, who sat on His Throne over their heads. (Ezek. 1:25-28), but the “wheels” are absent in John’s vision, for the scene is in Heaven, the permanent home of Throne of God.

In the camping and marching order of Israel in the Wilderness, there was a fixed relation of the Twelve Tribes to the Tabernacle. While they were stopped and in this camping formation the Tabernacle rested

in the middle and the camp of Judah, composed of three tribes, rested on the East, with the Standard bearing the figure of a "Lion". The camp of Ephraim, composed of three tribes rested on the West, with its Standard bearing the figure of an "Ox". The camp of Reuben, composed of three tribes, rested on the South, with its standard bearing the figure of a "Man". The camp of Dan, composed of three tribes, rested on the North, with its Standard bearing the figure of an "Eagle". Thus the Tabernacle in the center of the Camp, the place of God's Presence, was surrounded and protected by Standards of the "Living Creatures" found here and in Ezekiel.

The difference between Ezekiel's "Living Creatures" and John's "Living Creatures" can only be explained on the supposition that there are different orders of "Living Creatures" or "Cherubim", each adapted to the service he is created to perform. In Isaiah's Vision in the Temple of the Lord seated on His Throne, he saw a heavenly order of beings that he called the "Seraphim". They had 6 wings, like John's "Living Creatures", and cried "Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isa. 6:1-4), but they stood above the Throne, while Ezekiel's Cherubim supported the Throne, and John's "Living Creatures" were in the midst and around the Throne. Whatever significances there may be in the different forms the "Cherubim" or "Living Creatures" took, it is clear that they do not represent the Church, but are attendants, or officials attached to the Throne of God, for they summon, the four Horsemen to appear (Rev. 6:1-8), and one of them hands to the "Seven Vial Angels", the "Golden Vials" filled with the "Wrath of God". Rev. 15:7. And when they give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sits upon the Throne, who liveth forever and ever, the "Four and Twenty Elders" fall down before Him that sits upon the Throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created". Rev. 4:9-11.

Worship is the activity of heaven.

We also find the "Living Creatures" identified in the 4 gospels.

"The first living creature was like a lion" and the first Gospel represents the Lord Jesus as the King. He was born a King. He lived a King, He died a King, He was raised a King, and He is coming again as a King. Everything He does in the Gospel of Matthew He does as the King. Remember that God said that the tribe of Judah was like a lion, that the King, the Ruler, would come from that tribe, and that the scepter would not depart from Judah until Shiloh came. (Gen. 49:9-10, Rev. 5:5).

"The second living creature like a calf (Ox)." This is the beast of burden, the servant animal domesticated. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ is presented as the Servant. There is no genealogy given in this gospel. If you hire someone to mow your lawn or to wash your dishes, you do not ask him who his papa and mama are. Can they do the job? Mark shows Christ as the Servant who gets it done.

“The third living creature had a face as a man”. The third Gospel, the Gospel of Luke, presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man. It is His humanity that is emphasized.

“The fourth living creature was like a flying eagle”. He communicates the deity of Christ as seen in the Gospel of John.

“Fell down and worship”: Upon every sight and knowledge of the divine ways of God (His government). The true church has only one object of worship.

“Cast their crowns”: This is an act of submission and worship. The fact of any possession at all is attributed to the work of God so as to make this the only logical move. We owe all grace and glories to Him. His crown is so glorious we would of necessity lay ours down.

V11. “Thou art worthy”: The point of this chapter is summed up in this verse. All beings in heaven and earth will praise and honor God because He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything.

Worship is why we should want to go to heaven.

“Receive glory, honor, and power”: Glory-to have praise, honor-approached and ordered as worthy of, power-to be regarded as having all. We have no ability in our strength to cast these. We must acknowledge these in Him.

“For thy pleasure they are and were created”: Because of His will, Earth and mankind is and was His plan and purpose. We owe our existence to His will. Col. 1:16,17; Prov. 16:4.