

## **General Comments on Revelation 4-5**

These chapters turn the reader away from the ecclesiastical matters of the seven churches in the preceding chapters and focus instead on the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. The text introduces God the Father as Creator (ch. 4) and Jesus Christ as Redeemer (ch. 5), and is primarily intended to be a set of authority statements that introduce ch. 6. As Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, and Son of His Father by whom all things were created, He is entitled to Judge all of creation (ch. 6-18).

Secondary to this, the context of the ensuing chapters is established. The earth and all of creation is the Lord's and He does his pleasure on it as He sees fit (cf. 4:11). The subsequent chapters inform us Natural Israel is gathered, and in doing so, the wicked are damned along with Satan, and the righteous are exalted in heaven with Christ. The Lord's will for His creation is just that, and it is accomplished according to the outline given in the subsequent chapters.

The elders in ch. 4 and 5 who praise the Father and the Son for the Creation (cf. 4:11) and Redemption (5:9), represent those who have been exalted because of the plan of the Father and the Son. The angels in 5:11-13 echo the testimony of the Elders, and the beasts do as well in 5:14, providing the second and third sets of witnesses.

These chapters also inform the reader that John's writings are in fact documentary of an ongoing revelation. He is writing the text as he sees the heavenly vision, hence the statements of his writing (cf. 1:10, 2:1, 14:13, 19:9, 21:5), or not writing (cf. 10:4), as the vision unfolds.

## **Comments on Revelation 4**

The language and symbolism of this chapter is very similar to the visions recorded in Isa. 6, Ezek. 1, and Ezek. 10. John's vision of heaven is similar in content and to those of the preceding prophets. This indicates synchronicity between himself and the preceding prophets, and also serves to draw on the preceding body of prophetic literature and rhetorical style when it comes to interpreting symbols he employs.

**1 AFTER this I looked, and, behold, a door [was] opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will**

shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and [one] sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

v1-4 John looks and sees the heavens open and a loud voice summons him up into heaven to see things which are to happen in the future (v. 1). John is taken up by the Spirit into heaven to see the preeminent throne of God the Father (v. 3), around which are twenty four elders set upon thrones (v. 4).

v1 "a door...Come up hither", John is a mortal on earth and is summoned to transcend that mortality and enter in heaven to witness the apocalypse. The imagery used conveys the idea that heaven is above and separate from this mortal world we live in.

v2 "I was in the Spirit", spiritual things are discerned by the Spirit, not by the flesh, cp. 1 Cor. 2:14.

v3 John sees God the Father sitting upon His throne. John compares His appearance to a jasper stone, which is interpreted in being very valuable and translucent red (cp. 21:11), and a sardius, which being red is similar to the Lord's eyes being fiery red (cp. 1:14). The rainbow around the throne serves to compare His brightness to that of the sun, as on a sunny day with only cirrus clouds a perfectly round rainbow can be seen surrounding the sun.

v4 "And round about the throne", the IV/JST emends this to "And in the midst of the throne" which is more suggestive of unity, cp. D&C 29:13.

"were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats", the translation of the KJV "seats" would be better translated "thrones" as it is the identical Greek "thronos" translated to "throne" earlier in the verse in reference to God's throne. It is easy to assume the translators of the KJV were loathe to exalt the 24 thrones to the same status of God's. Modern translations render it "throne".

"four and twenty elders", these represent the faithful who

are exalted in the kingdom of heaven. D&C 77:5 comments upon them, as follows:

5 Q. What are we to understand by the four and twenty elders, spoken of by John?

A. We are to understand that these elders whom John saw, were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God.

Seven does not divide evenly into 24, so one must look for meaning elsewhere. Perhaps it represents two witnesses for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. But, 5:9 says these elders were redeemed from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. This necessarily implies they are beyond Israel. Perhaps the twenty four represents the twelve of natural Israel, plus the Gentile nations added to them, doubling their number.

"they had on their heads crowns like gold", the Greek term for the KJV "crown" is "stephanos" and would be better translated "wreath" or "garland". This is the same crown referred to in 3:11, and 4:10.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and [there were] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

6 And before the throne [there was] a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, [were] four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast [was] like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast [was] like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about [him]; and [they were] full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 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, saying, 11 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.

v5-11 These verses are a series of authority statements indicating all of Creation submits to the Lord. Nature (v. 5), all beasts of the earth (v. 6-9), and all men (v. 10-11)

acknowledge that God the Father is over all Creation and exercises His will over it as He sees fit.

Here is a threefold testimony (cf. Deut. 19:15, Matt. 18:16) of God's honor and power. The latter half of v. 5 and the first half of v. 6 appear to be parenthetical descriptive material.

v5 The verse is an authority statement derivative of Exod. 19:16. In this context, as nature does not have a voice as do men and beasts, it sounds off its devotion to the Father in the manner in which it can, which is thunderclaps. Compare Ps. 19:1-4 where Creation bears witness without words.

"voices", the Greek term is "phone" (pronounced: foe-nay) and means any sound that is articulated by the ear. Oftentimes it is clearly a human voice by context, but other times it is ambiguous what the sound is. The KJV translators consistently translate the term to "voice" or "voices" in this book. However, in the case where it is combined with "lightening and thunder" it can be just as fairly translated "lightening and thunder and noises" as the context does not suggest a human voice.

"the seven Spirits of God", the IV/JST emends this to "the seven servants of God". Thus, the seven burning oil lamps represent the one servant to each of the seven churches of Asia addressed in ch. 2-3. On the symbolism of the oil lamp, cp. Matt. 25:1. The servants of the Churches enjoy special spiritual authority and guidance, representative of the Priesthood, that emanates from the throne of God.

v6-8 The beasts, eyes, and wings are interpreted in D&C 77:2-4, as follows:

2 Q. What are we to understand by the four beasts, spoken of in the same verse?

A. They are figurative expressions, used by the Revelator, John, in describing heaven, the paradise of God, the happiness of man, and of beasts, and of creeping things, and of the fowls of the air; that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of

the beast, and every other creature which God has created.

3 Q. Are the four beasts limited to individual beasts, or do they represent classes or orders?

A. They are limited to four individual beasts, which were shown to John, to represent the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order or sphere of creation, in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity.

4 Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had?

A. Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge; and their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.

These beasts are quite similar to the cherubim of Ezek. 1, but here the beasts are presented more so as separate beasts where in Ezekiel's vision the cherubim are compound figures.

v6 "a sea of glass like unto crystal", symbolic of the earth in its future sanctified state, cf. D&C 77:1.

1 Q. What is the sea of glass spoken of by John, 4th chapter, and 6th verse of the Revelation?

A. It is the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.

This verse is clearly figurative.

"in the midst of the throne, and round about...", the IV/JST inserts "were the four and twenty elders" after the "throne" to make it clear that the elders and beasts were all present before God's throne, but only the elder's thrones were "in the midst" of God's throne. The emendation harmonizes this verse with 5:6.

v7 Aside from the obvious literal reading of there being resurrected animals in heaven, these animals in particular were commonly used symbolically in the Old Testament. For the lion cf. Gen. 49:9, Micah 5:8; calf/oxen cf. Deut. 33:13-17, 1 Kings 7:25; eagle cf. Isa. 46:11, Jer. 48:40. The symbolic value of these particular animals might suggest those who obtain heaven have the qualities these animals represent.

The literary connection to Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 also presents the four beasts as being the four strongest type of animals, which are running the Lord's [merkabah](#), or chariot-throne. The Lord's merkabah is not merely pulled by horses, it is pulled by beasts which encompass the strongest of the strong.

It is also possible the beast with a face like a man's is a gorilla or other primate, since it is clearly set with the animals and not the humans.

v9-11 The beasts and elders all worship and praise God, and note the elders cast their crowns at the feet of God, showing the source of their exaltation. The crowns represent exaltation (cf. 2:26-27, 3:5, 3:11, 3:19-22, 21:5-7, also cp. 1 Cor. 9:24-25, Hebr. 2:6-10), and so they acknowledge their exaltation because "thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created", which implies the theme of Moses 1:39.

v10 The elders are enthroned and crowned because of what the Lord has done for them, so they defer to Him, cp. Ps. 21:1-6.

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