

Worship In The Heavenly Tabernacle – Revelation 4

Chronologically, do the heavenly events in chapter 4-5 happen after the messages to the churches or are they happening simultaneously with the messages to the churches?

- I. John is Invited to See “What Must Happen” (1)
 - A. A Door Has Been Opened In Heaven (1a)
 1. “After these things...” means that this is the next vision John is shown – not necessarily that this is what will happen next
 2. Christ has just said he will grant the Conquerors to sit with Him on the Throne (3:21) – Now John is shown the heavenly throne
 3. “A door was opened in heaven” – “was opened” is a perfect passive participle
 - a. John is not seeing the door opening
 - b. John is seeing that the door in heaven had been opened
 - B. Jesus Calls John To Come and See (1b)
 1. The Same Voice as Chapter 1
 - a. The description of the voice as a trumpet does not signify the final trumpet when the church is “raptured” (as in 1 Th. 4:16-18; 1 Co. 15:51-54)
 - b. The description of the voice as a trumpet is a recollection of the description of the voice in chapter 1
 - c. This is the Voice of Jesus who spoke to John in chapter 1
 2. “Come Up Here”
 - a. There is absolutely no reason to see the church removed from earth in this verse
 - i. Some argue that the word church doesn’t appear again in the book until chapter 22, showing that it has been removed from earth
 - ii. The word Jesus doesn’t appear again till chapter 12 – this doesn’t mean he is absent
 - iii. The church is referred to as saints and the redeemed repeatedly throughout the book
 - b. John is Called and Commissioned as a Prophet
 - i. We will see that John is brought before the heavenly throne of God
 - ii. Many Old Testament Prophets Saw This Vision of the Throne
 - Ezekiel saw God’s Throne at his commission as a prophet (Eze. 1)
 - Isaiah also saw the throne of God at his commission as a prophet (Isa. 6)

- Micaiah also saw the throne of God in delivering his prophetic message (1 Ki. 22:19)
 - Daniel saw the Ancient of Days sitting on the throne (Dan. 7:9)
3. "The Things Which Must Take Place"
 - a. Another direct allusion to Daniel 2:28
 - i. See chapter 1 notes on John's use of Daniel's phrase
 - ii. John replaces Daniel's "in the last days" with "after these things"
 - iii. We must ask when are the "last days" according to the NT
 - b. The Last Days Begin At Jesus' Resurrection
 - i. See 1 Co. 10:11; Heb. 1:1-2; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20, 47; 1 Jn 2:18
 - ii. The NT is unified that the "last days" refer to the time between Christ's first and second coming
- II. John Sees The Heavenly Temple (2-8a)
- A. John Sees An Extravagant Throne in Heaven (2-3)
 1. The Throne in Heaven
 - a. "Throne" will be used 17x in chapters 4-5
 - b. The vision of the Throne will take elements directly from Ezekiel's vision (Eze. 1)
 2. The One Sitting on The Throne
 - a. Appearance Like Precious Stones
 - b. Rainbow Around the Throne
- NOTE: It would be easy to get side tracked into discussing intricate details of the meaning of the stones and the rainbow which point forward to the new creation. However, the overall picture John sees is the same vision Ezekiel saw. But John is seeing the vision from the Heavenly Tabernacle, while Ezekiel saw it from the earth.

Read Revelation 4 and compare it to what Ezekiel Saw

"Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. 27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. 28 As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness

of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking” – Ezekiel 1:26-28

B. John Sees Twenty Four Elders Around the Throne (4)

1. They Represent the People of God Through Christ

a. They are Called Elders

- i. The term “elder” is always used in Scripture to refer to those who administer and represent the saints of God
- ii. See Ex. 12:21; 17:5-6; 18:12; 24:9-11; Num. 11:16-17; 1 Ti. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; Heb. 13:17; James 5:14-15

b. They Sit on Thrones and Wear Crowns

- i. Believers are said to Reign with Christ (Rev. 1:6; 2 Ti. 2:12)
- ii. Believers are given crowns (2:10; 3:11)
- iii. They cast their crowns at the throne because God gave them their authority

c. They Are Dressed in White

- i. Believers are given white garments (Rev. 3:4; 3:18)

d. There are 24 of Them

- i. Some say because there are 12 tribes and 12 apostles – this is possible but it is speculation
- ii. They correspond to the 24 divisions of priests in the Temple (1 Chron. 24) and 24 divisions of singers in the Temple (1 Chron. 25)
 - They are not just kings but priests as well
 - They are worshiping God in the Heavenly Tabernacle
 - In Rev. 5:8 – these elders burn incense in the heavenly tabernacle which is a priestly duty in the OT

III. John Sees The Elements Of The Heavenly Tabernacle (5-6a)

A. The Throne Emits Lightning And Thunder (5a)

1. The OT representation of God’s presence (Ex. 19:16; 20:18)
2. Also a direct parallel to Ezekiel’s vision (Eze. 1:13)

B. The Throne Has Seven Lamps Before it (5b)

1. This is an allusion from Zech. 4:2-3, 10
2. See the notes on chapter 1 regarding the 7 lamps
3. John combines the images of Eze. 1 and Zech. 4 to show God’s presence

C. The Throne Has A Sea of Glass Before it (6a)

1. This corresponds to the Bronze Laver which was in the Tabernacle (Ex. 30:17; 1 Ki. 7:23-26)
2. Remember we are seeing the heavenly reality which the earthly tabernacle was patterned after

3. The pattern for the Tabernacle was given by God to mirror the heavenly Tabernacle

NOTE: Ezekiel sees the same vision that John sees. The heavenly throne room of God's Tabernacle. But Ezekiel sees it from the earth looking up through the "firmament" (the glass sea), John is in the tabernacle itself looking at the throne over the glass sea.

IV. John Sees Four Living Creatures Around The Throne (6b-8a)

- A. Living Creatures (ζωον) not "beasts"
- B. They Are Full of Eyes
- C. They Have The appearance of Creatures
 1. A Lion
 2. A Calf
 3. A Man
 4. An Eagle
- D. They Have Six Wings
- E. Rather than getting lost in speculation about what these pictures represent – we should see that John is mixing two Old Testament pictures of angelic beings
 1. Ezekiel 1 and 10 tell us that these are Cherubim
 2. Isa. 6 shows us that the Seraphim have six wings and cry Holy, Holy, Holy
 3. See Eze. 1:5-14; Eze. 10:13-15; Isa. 6:2
- F. They are Heavenly Servants of God who Worship The One on the Throne and The Lamb in Ch. 5

V. John Sees The Worship of The Sovereign God (8b-11)

- A. The Living Creatures Worship The One on The Throne (8b)
 1. They Never Cease
 2. They Cry Holy Holy Holy to The I Am
- B. The Twenty Four Elders Worship The One On the Throne (9-11)
 1. They Bow Down With The Living Creatures (9-10a)
 2. They Cast Their Crowns Before The Throne (10b)
 3. They Praise God As Creator And Sovereign
- C. All of creation Joins in the Worship of God
 1. God alone is to be worshiped as sovereign creator
 2. Even when the church is persecuted and going through trials