

## *Revelation Chapters 4 and 5*

# *The Throne Room of the Universe*

### *Revelation 4 – a throne in heaven*

“After this I looked...” (verse 1, μετὰ ταῦτα *meta tauta* = ‘after these things’ – after what things?) – John was transported through time and space to the throne room of the universe...

1. “Rainbow” (verse 3) translates the Greek word ἶρις (*iris*), which can also mean ‘halo’; the jasper (white), carnelian (red) and emerald (green) may have significance as precious stones (e.g. foundations in the New Jerusalem, as described in Revelation 21 v 19, 20), or they may simply be ways of describing different coloured light.
2. The word “throne” occurs about 60 times in the New Testament, 43 times in the Book of Revelation, and 14 times in this chapter alone. Jesus will sit on ‘his glorious throne’ (Matthew 25 v 31); on the ‘throne of grace’ (Hebrews 4 v 16); and on the ‘throne of his father David’ (Luke 1 v 32). The twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19 v 28); but unbelievers will be judged before the ‘great white throne’ (Revelation 20 v 12). Here twenty-four “elders” (verse 4) also sit on thrones...
3. The “torches of fire” (verse 5, not to be confused with the lampstands in Chapter 1) “which are the seven spirits of God” represent the sevenfold Spirit of God (Isaiah 11 v 2, see also Acts 2 v 3).
4. The “sea of glass” (verse 6) is reminiscent of the laver in the tabernacle, and washing with the water of the Word (Ephesians 5 v 26).
5. The four “living creatures” (verse 6) are cherubim or seraphs, angelic beings who surround the throne of God (Isaiah 6 v 2); “full of eyes” implies they are not blind robots, but have insight and perception. The four faces (lion, ox, man, eagle) may reflect the ensigns of the four leading tribes (Judah, Ephraim, Reuben, Dan) as Israel encamped around the tabernacle in the wilderness (see Numbers 2); they may also symbolise the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

### *Revelation 5 – the scroll with seven seals*

The “scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals” in Roman times suggests a title deed – perhaps this scroll is the Certificate of Title for the planet Earth, which Adam forfeited, but Christ purchased with his blood, as our ‘kinsman-redeemer’ (see Jeremiah 32 v 6 to 27)...

- Why did John weep (verse 4)?
- Who was worthy and able to open the seals?
- Note the Jewish titles: the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49 v 9); the Root of David (Isaiah 11 v 1); the Lamb that was slain (John 1 v 29).
- “Seven horns” (verse 6) symbolise omnipotence (Zechariah 1 v 18); the “seven eyes”, symbolic of omniscience, occur in Zechariah 4 v 10.
- Incense symbolises the prayers of saints (see Revelation 8 v 3, 4; Psalm 141 v 2).
- Who joins the twenty-four elders in their song of worship (verse 11)?
- The Lamb is worthy to receive seven gifts: power, wealth, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing (verse 12) – what is their significance? See Philippians 2 v 9 to 11.

**[MORE OVER...]**

## ***Who are the twenty-four elders?***

1. The elders represent a completed group (similar to David's twenty-four divisions of priests in 1 Chronicles 24); "elders" is the Greek word πρεσβύτεροι (*presbyteroi*), used in the New Testament to denote the highest officials representing the whole church (Acts 15 v 6).
2. The twenty-four elders are NOT (a) tribulation believers (Revelation 7 v 13, 14); (b) angels (Revelation 7 v 11); or (c) Israel (see Revelation 12). They are seated on thrones, they are clothed in white garments (Revelation 4 v 4), and they wear golden crowns (στέφανος, *stephanos* = 'victor's crown' – angels are never crowned); and they sing the 'song of the redeemed'; they are elders, kings and priests (see 1 Peter 2 v 9).
3. "And they sang a new song..." (verse 9) – this is the key to the identity of the twenty-four elders; "you ransomed people... you have made them a kingdom and priests" (verses 9, 10) is an incorrect translation, found only in the (spurious) Codex Alexandrinus; more than twenty other reliable manuscripts (including Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Basilianus) translate the text as "you redeemed us... you have made us kings and priests... and we shall reign on the earth" as in the King James Version.

*So, who exactly are the twenty-four elders, and where are they situated in these two chapters of the Book of Revelation?*

The next fourteen chapters of the Book of Revelation (i.e. Chapters 6 to 19) document the final seven year period before Christ's return, the "70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel", the last half of which (3½ years) is known as the 'Great Tribulation' (see Matthew 24). But note the order of events here:

1. The tribulation judgments cannot begin until the seals are open.
2. The seals cannot be opened until the Lamb takes the scroll from God's right hand.
3. This does not happen until the twenty-four elders fall down in worship, laying their crowns before God's throne.

*Prayer –*

*Lord, thank you for this amazing picture of your throne of glory. We praise you for your greatness and for your majesty, and we thank you Lord Jesus that by your death upon the cross we are ransomed and redeemed.*

*With the elders and the angels we say,*

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honour and glory and blessing!*

*Amen!*