Revelation 4

The Throne Room of God

- As we learned in Revelation 1:19, the book of Revelation is broken into 3 parts . . . **first, *the things which you have seen***, which are recorded in Revelation chapter 1. **Second, *the things which are,*** which are recorded in Revelation chapters 2-3 . . . the letters to the 7 churches, ***and,*** **third, *the things which shall take place after these things***, which are recorded in Revelation chapters 4-22.

    - Having studied the first two sections of Revelation, we now embark on the **third . . . and by far, the longest . . . section of Revelation.**

- The third section of Revelation is the prophetic section of the book . . . ***the things which shall take place after these things***.

    - And as we begin this prophetic section of the book, we begin with a glimpse of ***heaven***, as seen and described by John. **Specifically, in Revelation chapters 4 & 5 John describes the throne room of God.**

- **But these two chapters are not simply a glimpse of activity in heaven. Revelation chapters 4-5 are the prelude to the judgments that God will unleash on the earth during the Tribulation.**

    - Because the events of Revelation 4-5 occur at the beginning of the Tribulation, **they are not timeless**. They are events that are yet future to John . . . and to us. **The events of Revelation 4-5 begin the Tribulation.**

- As Christians, we are fascinated with the subject of heaven. We long to know what heaven is like and, most of all, we long to be there. After all, our citizenship is not here on the earth. Our citizenship is in heaven . . . a place we have never seen nor have we ever been to. But we long to know about heaven, because that is home.

    - I did a word search and found that there are **613 verses** in the Bible that refer to ***heaven*** or ***heavens***, **49 of them occurring in Revelation**. Yet, for all the references to ***heaven***, we know very little about it.

- In fact, in Scripture there are **three different "heavens"** that are referred to.

    - The **first heaven** is the earth's atmosphere. We see this described in the creation of the earth in Genesis 1:8-9 . . .

      Genesis 1:8-9— 8 And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. 9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

- The **second heaven** is outer space . . . the location of the stars and moon and planets. It is this ***heaven*** that is referred to in Deuteronomy 1:10 in speaking of the multitude of Israel . . .

  Deuteronomy 1:10— 'The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

- The **third heaven** is the dwelling place of God. It is this place that the apostle Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 12:2 in describing being taken up and shown heaven by God . . .

  2 Corinthians 12:2— I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

- So, in referring to ***heaven*** in Scripture, it is important to discern which ***heaven*** is being referred to. Here in Revelation chapters 4-5 John is referring to **the third heaven . . . the location of God's throne.**

- What we know of the **third heaven** is that it exists in the supernatural realm . . . outside our natural universe, thus making it impossible for us to see or discover anything about it.

  - We also know that ***heaven*** is where God rules from and where the holy angels attend Him.

  - But beyond that, we know nothing.

- So, as we arrive at chapters 4-5 in our study of Revelation, we arrive at the section of the Bible that gives us one of the greatest insights into what ***heaven*** looks like found in the Bible.

John called up to heaven

4:1— After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

- In Revelation 4:1 John begins this third section of the book with a time marker, the phrase ***after these things***.

  - As A.T. Robertson notes, this Greek phrase signifies "change in panorama, not chronology." **In other words**, **beginning in Revelation 4 John receives a <u>new</u> vision**, not a continuation of the vision from chapters 2-3.

  - This phrase, ***after these things***, is also found in Revelation 7:9, 15:5, 18:1 and 19:1 and denotes **a sequence of the visions** that John receives.

- After indicating the beginning of this new vision, John states, ***I looked*** (Greek: *horaō*). The use of this word means "to take notice of." **Something appears to John.**

- To his statement that **he *looked***, John then adds the emphatic word, ***behold***, indicating a significant event is about to be described.

- And the event that John is about to describe is the fact that he saw ***a door standing open in heaven***. John is given the ability to look up into the sky and see **the door of heaven open**.

    - The fact that the ***door*** is described as ***standing open*** indicates that the door was already ***open*** when it appears to John.

- Then, having noticed the ***door standing open***, John hears a voice . . . ***the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet***.

    - The description of the voice being ***like the sound of a trumpet*** is the same description John uses in Revelation 1:10 to describe the voice of the Lord when He first appeared to him.

    - This description is interesting because John obviously knows that it is a spoken voice, but the sound of the voice is described as ***like the sound of a trumpet*** indicates that this is not a natural voice, but the supernatural voice of Christ that speaks loudly and with authority.

- And not only does John hear the authoritative voice of Christ, but he states that the voice is speaking to him, directly. And the thing which the voice of Christ states is . . . ***"Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."***

    - The call to ***come up here*** is **not an invitation, but a command**. The Lord is commanding John to enter into heaven to observe the events that are about to occur.

    - This command to ***come up here*** is, virtually, a rapture command as the Lord commands John's appearance before Him without consideration of John's desire and without John's consent.

    - This same command, to ***come up here***, will also be used by God again in Revelation 11:12 when He commands the two slain witnesses to return to heaven.

- Then, having commanded John to ***come up here***, He then gives **the purpose of His summons** . . . the Lord says ***I will show you what must take place after these things.***

    - While some suggest that this is a passage that describes the **Rapture**, it is not. Here in v. 1 when the Lord says ***I will show you what must take place . . .*** the pronoun ***you*** is singular, meaning **only *you, John***.

    - The phrase, ***I will show you***, signifies God the Father is granting to God the Son the responsibility of transmitting the revelation to His bondservant and, ultimately, fulfilling the promise in Revelation 6:1 in which the Lord initiates the breaking of the seven-sealed scroll.

    - This statement is also significant because it emphasizes the fact of the certainty of the prophecy. Here God is telling us what His divine will is for the future of the world. The word ***must*** (Greek: *dei*) can also be translated ***necessary***, indicating God's sovereign decree that the events about to be revealed to John ***must take place*** because God has decreed them.

- Revelation 4:1 ends with the second occurrence of the phrase, ***after these things***. But the use of the phrase at the end of the verse is different from the same phrase at the beginning of this verse.

- The first use of the phrase, ***after these things***, marks the beginning of **a new vision**. The second use of the phrase is **a chronological marker**. It describes how the scene shifts from matters concerning the church to ***things which will take place after these things***. In other words, **after the letters to the churches.** It is the beginning of the prophetic section of Revelation chapters 4-22 . . . **a revelation of events that are yet future**.

The scene in heaven

v. 2— Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

- John begins his description of the scene in heaven with the statement, ***immediately I was in the Spirit***.

  - The word ***immediately*** (Greek: *eutheōs*) describes John's instantaneous translation into the throne room of God. **John goes from standing on the earth and supernaturally seeing the *door open in heaven* to instantly being transported into the throne room of heaven.**

- The phrase ***I was in the Spirit*** signifies that after the first vision ended in Revelation 3:22, John had returned to his normal senses. In Revelation 4:1 John returns to his ecstatic state and is transported spiritually, not physically, into heaven.

  - **In other words**, while John remains bodily on the isle of Patmos, his spirit and all his mental faculties are fully operative while taking in the vision. This is the same state he was in in Revelation 1:10-3:22.

- Again, just as he did in v. 1, John uses the word ***behold*** to call our attention to what he sees . . . ***a throne was standing in heaven***.

  - The throne of God is extremely prominent throughout Revelation. **It is mentioned in 16 of the 22 chapters of Revelation.**

  - The ***throne*** **symbolizes God's sovereignty** exercised in judgment and from the thrones proceeds the outworking of God's wrath.

- In v. 2 when John describes seeing ***One sitting on the throne***, he is describing seeing God the Father occupying His place as the sovereign of all heaven and earth.

  - The translation, ***sitting***, is an anthropomorphic term. The Greek word can also mean "to reside, dwell or occupy." Since God the Father is spirit, He does not so much **sit** on His ***throne*** as He ***dwells upon*** or ***occupies*** it.

The description of the One on the throne

v. 3— And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

- In v. 3 John describes ***the One sitting on the throne***.

- To begin with, think about what we have here in Revelation 4:3-6. Here in 4 verses . . . in our English translation, **119 words** . . . John attempts to describe what God looks and the throne room in heaven, with God on His throne!

    - Imagine if you were shown God sitting on His throne and were told, "describe God and the throne room of God in 119 words or less." For us it would be an impossible task. It reminds me of the third stanza of the hymn, ***The Love of God*** . . .

      Could we with ink the ocean fill,
      And were the skies of parchment made;
      Were every stalk on earth a quill,
      And every man a scribe by trade;
      To write the love of God above
      Would drain the ocean dry;
      Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
      Though stretched from sky to sky.

    - And yet, John . . . through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit . . . does it. He describes in brief, but vivid, detail what he sees. Here is great evidence of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Scripture. **Only God could succinctly describe God sufficiently** to convey what John was seeing.

- John's use of the anthropomorphic description of God the Father ***sitting on the throne*** is affirmed by his description of God the Father as being ***like a jasper stone and a sardius***. Here John uses human terms to try to describe the unimaginable and indescribable appearance of the majesty and glory of God on His throne.

    - The ***jasper stone*** is the last of the twelve stones in the High Priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:20; Ex. 39:13), and the first of the twelve enumerated in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19). It is also the stone employed in the superstructure of the wall of the Heavenly City (Rev. 21:18). The stone itself was of different colors, the best being purple. According to Rev. 21:11, it represents a crystalline brightness.

        - The ***jasper stone*** is usually believed to represent the holiness of God.

    - The ***sardius*** is the sixth foundation-stone of the Heavenly Jerusalem, described in Rev. 21:20.

        - Being a rich red in color, the fiery red ***sardius*** is thought to represent God's justice in executing His fiery wrath.

The description <u>around</u> the throne

- Then, from describing ***He who was sitting*** **on the throne**, John then begins to describe the scene <u>around</u> the throne.

    - **First**, John describes that ***there was a rainbow around the throne***.

- Note that unlike the ***rainbow*** that we see on the earth, which is only a half-circle, here in this scene in heaven the ***rainbow <u>around</u>*** **. . . completely encircling . . .** ***the throne***.



- Such a picture of a full-circle ***rainbow*** encircling the ***throne*** is symbolic of God's **glory and eternality**. We see a similar description in the theophany in Ezekiel 1:26-28 . . .

  Ezekiel 1:26-28— 26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli **[blue sapphire]** ***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.***

- **Then** John describes how the ***throne*** and the surrounding ***rainbow*** are ***like an emerald in appearance***.

  - As A.T. Robertson puts it, "John sees no form for God, only the brilliant flashing gems. In the vision the flashing luster of the *laspis* and the fiery red of the *sardius* are enhanced by the halo (*iris*) of emerald which encircled the Throne."

- Note the significance of the **blood red** color of ***sardius*** of God's appearance with the ***rainbow around the throne, like an emerald***. While the red color of ***sardius*** represents the justice and wrath of God, His wrath is tempered by the ***emerald*** green color of the rainbow around the throne, which represents God's mercy and grace.

  - Tom Pennington points out that even as God's wrath is about to be poured out on the earth, the green rainbow is a reminder that His wrath will never come at the expense of

His promises to those with whom He has entered into covenant. The emerald rainbow is a reminder that while God is holy and just and judges all sin impartially, there is the promise of salvation and deliverance for all who receive salvation through His Son.

- The picture John describes is of the glory of heaven and the surpassing glory of God enthroned in heaven. But, **as Ezekiel 1:28 reminds us, such descriptions are only of *the likeness of the glory of the LORD.*** Words cannot do justice to the surpassing glory and greatness of God in heaven.

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24 elders—who are they?

v. 4— Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

- Then, as his eyes move from the throne of God, John then notices those who are also present in the throne room of God. First John describes seeing, arrayed ***around the throne*** of God, ***twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones twenty-four elders***.

- The identification or identity of these ***twenty-four elders*** is the source of much debate and disagreement among scholars and commentators.

  - The reason for the debate and disagreement is because there is no clear explanation or indication of whether the ***twenty-four elders*** are **men or angels**.

  - Let's take a few minutes to examine what Scripture says about these ***twenty-four elders.***

The First View—the *twenty-four elders* are human

- The term ***elders*** (Greek: *presbuteros*) is a term that is generally used in reference to "elder men" of society (1 Tim. 5:1), Jewish religious leaders (Acts 15:4) or the leadership office in the church (1 Peter 5:5).

  - Other than possibly here in Revelation 4:4, nowhere in Scripture is the term ***elders*** used to refer to angelic creatures.

- If the ***twenty-four elders*** referred to in Revelation 4:4 are men, who are they? **3 views are possible—**

  1. **The *elders* are representatives of Israel**.

  - In 1 Chronicles 24 we learn that the two surviving sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, carry on the priestly duties after their father. In 1 Chronicles 24 King David divided the priesthood among **the 24 descendants** of Eleazar and Ithamar, making **24 priests of Israel who ministered to the Lord.**

  2. **The *elders* are representatives of the church.**

- In Acts 14:23, 15:6, 20:17, and 21 :18 we see that the apostles appointed elders in the churches they established to lead each congregation.

3. The *elders* are representatives of both Israel and the church

- The number 24 would fit nicely with the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles.

- We see evidence in support of this view in Revelation 21:12-14, along with Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30 and the dual reference to the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb in Rev. 15:3.

  Revelation 21:12-14— 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

  Matthew 19:28— And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

  Luke 22:29-30— 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Supporting Evidence:

- The Greek term *presbuteros* applied more easily to men than angels (Heb. 11 :2), **although** the Septuagint reading of Is. 24:23 prefers to a heavenly assembly presumably angels, whose members are heavenly beings called *tōn presbuteron* (the elders).

- White clothing is generally the clothing of the saints (Rev. 3:5, 18) **although** we also find angels clothed in white (John 20:12; Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10)

- Crowns of gold are often associated with redeemed man (Rev. 3: 11) **although** crowns of gold could denote royal dignity of those associated with the throne of God (1 Kings 22: 19; Psalm 89:7) **and,** crowns of gold do not exclusively denote redemption (Rev. 9:7- demonic locusts; Rev. 14:14—son of man)

- The elders are seated on thrones (Rev. 3:21) **although** the redeemed are not seated on thrones until the Millennium (Rev. 20:4 w/1 Cor. 6:2)

- The elders are representatives of the 12 patriarchs of Israel and the 12 apostles (Rev. 21: 12-14) **although this view** requires the church be seen as a fusion of OT and NT saints— a foreign concept to Dispensationalism. **And if** the ***elders*** are made up of the 12 apostles, John failed to recognize his fellow apostles as well as himself!

The Second View—the *elders* are a category of angels

- This view sees the **24 elders as a special class or college of angels**. They are beings of high authority that belong to the court of God in heaven.

  Supporting Evidence:

  - The reference to ***twenty-four elders*** is always grouped with angelic beings rather than men, but are distinguished from other angelic subgroups (Rev. 7:9-11; 19:1-4)

  - One of the ***elders*** performs the sole function of offering bowls of incense that is later performed by an angel (Rev. 5:8; 8:3)

  - The phrase ***one of the elders*** in Rev. 5:5 and 7:13 indicates the ***elders*** were separate created beings rather than collectively representing a larger group.

  - In Rev. 7:14 the ***elder*** acts as an agent of revelation similar to other angels (Rev. 1:1; 17:3; 22:6 w/ Dan. 9:21-27)

  - Angels are regularly pictured as present with God in heaven (1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 89:7; Isa. 24:23)

  - White apparel is characteristic of angelic beings (Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; John 20:12; Acts 1:10)

  - ***crown*** (Greek: *stephanos*) are emblematic of royalty in the royal court of heaven

Position of the 24 Elders—

- If the ***twenty-four elders*** are angels, they appear to be subordinate to the ***4 living creatures*** in Rev. 4:6

- They respond to the signal of the ***4 living creatures*** to fall down and worship (Rev. 4:9- 10).

- When the two orders (***elders*** **and** ***living creatures***) come together, the ***4 living creatures*** are always listed first (Rev. 4:9, 10; 5:6, 8, 14; 14:3).

  - **Note: There are three exceptions—**

    - In Rev. 4:4 & 6 the ***4 living creatures*** are placed last to prepare for their song in Rev. 4:8, which introduces the sequence of 4:9-11.

    - In Rev. 7:9-11 the sequence is determined by their distance from the throne . . . the outer echelons given first.

      - **great multitude of redeemed → angels → 24 elders→ 4 living creatures → throne**

    - Rev. 19:1-4 is the same as Rev. 7:9-11, yet without the redeemed.

- **great multitude of <u>angels</u> → 24 elders → 4 living creatures → throne**

A Storm Theophany and the Holy Spirit

v. 5— Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

- Returning his attention to God's throne, John describes what he sees. And what John **sees <u>and</u> hears** is what is termed **a storm theophany**. **The majestic sights and sounds John hears are coming from God, Himself.**

  - A **theophany** is a physical manifestation of God. We see the preincarnate Christ appear in human form in the Old Testament on several occasions.

  - Here in Revelation 4:5, when John describes that ***out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder***, John is describing a **storm theophany . . . a physical manifestation of God as a storm**.

  - God is not literally ***lightning and thunder***, but He manifests Himself in this way in order to demonstrate His displeasure and as a prelude to His wrath that is about to be poured out upon the earth.

- Then, having described the appearance of the **storm theophany**, John then describes what he sees surrounding God's throne . . . ***seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God***.

  - The word ***lamps*** (Greek: *lampas*) can refer to either "a lamp fed by a supply of oil" or "a flaming torch." It seems likely that the second . . . a flaming torch . . . is intended.

  - The description of the ***seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*** seems to indicate that these ***seven lamps*** are not being used for light, but to symbolize **judgment and divine preparedness** for the battle against wickedness that is soon to begin.

  - We see this symbolism in Judges 7:16-20 as Gideon is about to enter into battle.

    Judges 7:16-20— 16 He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers. 17 He said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18 When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'" 19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

  - We see another example of ***torches*** and the ***lightning*** of God's judgment in Nahum 2:3-4 . . .

Nahum 2:3-4— 3 The shields of His mighty men are colored red, the warriors are dressed in scarlet, the chariots are enveloped in flashing steel when he is prepared to march, and the cypress spears are brandished. 4 The chariots race madly in the streets, they rush wildly in the squares, their appearance is like torches, they dash to and fro like lightning flashes.

What are the *seven lamps*?

- As we read in v. 5, the ***seven lamps of fire burning before the throne are the seven Spirits of God***.

  - If, as v. 5 says, the ***seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God***, **in what way is the Holy Spirit divided into 7 parts?**

    - As Vincent's Word Studies states, "To a remarkable extent the structure of Revelation is molded by the use of numbers, especially of the numbers seven, four, and three. There are **seven spirits** before the throne; **seven churches**; **seven golden candlesticks; seven stars** in the right hand of Him who is like unto a son of man; **seven lamps of fire** burning before the throne; **seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb; seven seals of the book**; and the **thunders**, the **heads of the great dragon** and of the beast from the sea, the **angels with the trumpets**, the **plagues**, and the **mountains** which are the seat of the mystic Babylon, - are all seven in number."

    - **In other words**, the reference to ***the seven Spirits of God*** is **a reference to the Holy Spirit and the number of divine completion**. **The Holy Spirit of God with seven manifestations.**

The Angelic Attendants of God

v. 6— and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

- Continuing his description of the heavenly scene, in v. 6 John continues to describe the indescribable glory of heaven.

  1. First, John describes the appearance of the area ***before the throne*** as being ***something <u>like</u> a sea of glass, <u>like</u> crystal***.

  - The emphasis in the description here is **not on the <u>composition</u>** of the material (***glass***), **but the <u>appearance</u>** of the material, which John further describes as being ***like crystal***.

    - The description is intended to emphasize God's purity and holiness . . . crystal clear and radiant in glory.

  - The only other place where this phrase, ***sea of glass***, appears in Scripture is in Revelation 15:2 . . .

Revelation 15:2— And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

- We see a similar description of this purity and holiness in Revelation 22:1 . . .

  Revelation 22:1— Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb

2. Second, in v. 6 John describes an additional class of angels attending God . . . ***and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind***.

- In the phrase, ***in the center and around the throne***, we see that **this class of angels is closer in proximity to God's throne**, when compared to the thrones of the ***twenty-four elders*** we see in v. 4.

- And the class of angels that is closer in position to God's throne is described as ***four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind***.

- In describing these ***four living creatures*** being ***full of eyes in front and behind***, the description emphasizes **alertness and comprehensive knowledge.**

- Note that while these angels have **great knowledge**, this **does not imply omniscience**. Rather, God has created these angels with such penetrative knowledge that they are immediately aware of their judicial authority.

The description of the *four living creatures*

v. 7— The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.

- Unlike the creatures in Ezekiel 1:5-11, which had **4 facial appearances each**, these creatures have **only 1 likeness each**.

  - ***like a lion***— represents what is most noble and regal of this "king of the beasts."

  - ***like a calf***— the Septuagint uses the word ***ox***, representing one of the strongest of the beasts in the natural world.

    - Certainly a rhinoceros or elephant would be stronger, but would have been unknown to John or his audience.

  - ***like that of a man***— represents intelligence and reason in the natural world.

  - ***like a flying eagle***— represents the swiftness of the "king of the birds."

  - Taken together, all four creatures picture natural, animate creation from the perspective of greatest nobility, strength, wisdom and speed.

What do they all have in common?

v. 8a— And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within;

- Each of the ***four living creatures*** is described as having ***six wings***.
    - As we see in Isaiah 6:2 to describe the Seraphim . . .

      Isaiah 6:2— Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

- Though there is a similarity in the description of the ***four living creatures*** and the ***Seraphim***, Isaiah 6:2 specifically identifies the angels as **seraphim**, while here in Revelation 4:7-8 they are termed ***living creatures***. **Could they be seraphim?** Possibly, but not likely.

- There is a similarity between the ***living creatures*** of Revelation 4:7-8 and the angels described in Ezekiel 1:5-11 . . .

  Ezekiel 1:5-11— 5 Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. 6 Each of them had four faces and four wings. 7 Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. 8 Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, 9 their wings touched one another; their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. 10 As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. 11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another being, and two covering their bodies.

    - While there is a similarity, there are differences between the description in Revelation 4 and Ezekiel 1.
        - The angels in Revelation 4 have **6 wings**, while the **cherubim** in Ezekiel 1 have **4 wings.**
        - The angels in Revelation 4 have **1 face each**, while the **cherubim** in Ezekiel 1 have **4 faces each**.

What are the *living beings* doing?

v. 8b— and day and night they do not cease to say, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

- In examining the description of the actions of these ***living creatures***, we learn that ***day and night they do not cease to say, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."***
    - When not carrying out God's will, their practice is to praise and worship God.

- **It is significant to note** that these ***four living creatures*** are responsible for summoning the **4 riders who open the first 4 seals** in Revelation 6:1-7.

- Similar to the cries of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6, these ***four living creatures*** are saying ***"holy, holy, holy."***

  - This three-fold ascription of holiness is called a **trisagion**, meaning "an invocation of God as the thrice holy" and emphasizes God's distance from an unholy creation.

- In the phrase, ***is the Lord God, the Almighty***, we see the title of God the Father.

  - This title is especially applied to Him as the series of wrathful acts against a rebellious world move to its climax.

- Note in Revelation 4:8 that the order of phrase is ***who <u>was</u> and who <u>is</u> and who <u>is to come</u>***, while in Revelation 1:4, 1:8 and 11:17 the sequence is ***who <u>is</u> and who <u>was</u> and who <u>is to come</u>***. **Why the difference in the sequence?**

  - It seems likely that the difference in the sequence is because of the attribute of God that is being emphasized here . . . **His eternality and eternal glory.**

  - In Revelation 1:4, 1:8 and 11:17 the mention of God ***who is*** emphasizes **the present activity of God as the sovereign ruler over creation.**

The activity around the throne of God

v. 9-11— 9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

- In Revelation 4:9-11 we have what is described as "the song of the 24 elders." Note several things about what John writes in v. 9-11.

  - First, in v. 9 when John states that ***when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne***, John is <u>describing</u> their song, which is recorded in v. 11.

  - Second, as we read in v. 10, when the ***twenty-four elders*** hear the song of the ***four living creatures*** in v. 8, ***the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne***. **In other words**, the ***twenty-four elders fall down*** <u>in response</u> to the ***living creatures*** giving ***glory and honor and thanks*** to God. The ***twenty-four elders*** then add their own song of worship and praise to God.

- In v. 9 John describes the purpose of the song of the living creatures. ***Glory and honor*** are the attributes of God that the living creatures are praising and their ***thanks*** is for God's gift of creation.

- In the two phrases in v. 10 . . . ***Him who sits on the throne*** and ***who lives forever and ever*** . . . these angelic creatures are praising and glorifying God for His **majesty and eternality**.

    - **The song of praise of the *twenty-four elders* is in response to the *four living creatures* giving *glory and honor and thanks* to God.**

- When the ***twenty-four elders*** hear the song of praise of the ***four living creatures***, theirs is a 3-fold response.

    - First, they ***fall down before Him***.

    - Second, they ***worship Him***.

    - Third, they ***cast their crowns before the throne***.

- The word ***fall*** (Greek: *piptō*) means "to prostrate oneself to render homage." Their prone position is for the purpose of worshipping God.

    - Six times in Scripture we see the ***twenty-four elders*** prostrating themselves before God or the Lamb:

        - **3 times** they, alone, fall down before God (Rev. 4:10; 5:14; 11:16)

        - **2 times** the ***twenty-four elders*** and the ***four living creatures*** fall down before God (Rev. 5:8; 19:4)

        - **1 time** the ***twenty-four elders***, the ***four living creatures*** and **angels** fall down before God (Rev. 7:11)

- The word ***worship*** (Greek: *proskuneō*) means "humble adoration of the sovereign Creator.

- The word ***cast*** (Greek: *ballō*) means "to throw, hurl or lay down." The word ***crown*** (Greek: *stephanos*) is emblematic of royalty.

    - The significance of the ***twenty-four elders casting their crowns before the throne*** signifies their submission to the honor and authority of God

The song of the twenty-four elders

v. 11— "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

- The focus of the song of the 24 elders is on the glory of God in regard to His creation of all that He has created.

    - Because of the greatness of creation, God is worthy to receive glory for all that He has accomplished. **This song of praise is also a reminder that as the Creator, the creation**

belongs to God and only God has the right to do with it as He chooses, which we will see beginning in chapter 5.

- Note in v. 11 that the 24 elders declare God's worthiness to receive ***glory and honor and power***.

  - The first two terms, ***glory and honor***, are the same first two terms found in the song of the 4 living creatures in v. 8.

  - The third term in v. 11, ***power***, differs from the third in v. 8 (***thanks***).

- The song of the ***four living creatures*** focuses on God's **holiness, omnipotence and eternality**, while the song of the ***twenty-four elders*** focuses on God's **glory, reflected in His creative works.**

- The specific reason for God's worthiness to receive ***glory and honor and power*** is expressed at the end of v. 11 . . . ***for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.***

  - The song of the 24 elders in Revelation 4:11 is very similar to what we see in several of the psalms. For example:

    Psalm 33:6-9— 6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

    Psalm 102.25— "Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

    Psalm 136:5-9— 5 To Him who made the heavens with skill, for His lovingkindness is everlasting; 6 To Him who spread out the earth above the waters, for His lovingkindness is everlasting; 7 To Him who made the great lights, for His lovingkindness is everlasting: 8 The sun to rule by day, for His lovingkindness is everlasting, 9 The moon and stars to rule by night, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.

- In Revelation 5:8-9 the throne of redemption is predominant. Here in Revelation 4:11 the way is being prepared for the announcement that the long-awaited redemption of creation is on the brink of fulfillment.

  - Robert Thomas— *"With the song of the twenty-four elders, this initial scene in the throne room closes. John's invitation to heaven (4:1), the heavenly throne room (4:2-4), and activities around the throne (4:5-11) made a deep impression on the seer as they do upon any who seriously ponder their implication. Here is the headquarters of the holy and omnipotent and eternal God who requires His standard to be met by His creation. If they are not, His wrath must inflict penalties upon the rebellious who are among the works of His hand."*

Revelation 5

The Seven Sealed Scroll

- Then, having been taken into the throne room in heaven and having briefly described the glorious scene before him, John is then given the privilege of witnessing a second scene. This second scene focuses on an interaction between God the Father and God the Son concerning an important document . . . **a seven-sealed scroll.**

- We live in a world that is filled and bound by contracts and ownership rights. Our property lines are defined by legally drawn surveys and recorded in county records. Our homes are defined as our property by deeds of ownership. Our marriages are recorded in legal documents so the state can validate our rights as married couples. Our cars and trucks are protected by deeds of ownership issued by the state. **Legal ownership contracts and documents are used everywhere in our lives to validate our claims and rights of ownership.**

- In the scene before us, in Revelation chapter 5, we have a heavenly example of a legal proceeding in which ownership and the rights of ownership are asserted. In this instance the person who is claiming ownership is God, and the thing He is declaring His ownership over is His creation.

- The scene John now describes occurs in four parts, each part introduced with the phrase ***and I saw*** or ***I looked*** . . . v. 1, v. 2, v6 and v. 11.

Part One— The Introduction of the seven sealed scroll

v. 1— I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

- John begins this scene by describing what God the Father is doing . . . ***I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book***

    - The word ***book*** (Greek: *biblion*) means "a book, a scroll, or certificate."

    - The type of bound books that we use today were not invented until the second century A.D., after John wrote Revelation. Prior to bound books being invented writing were recorded scrolls. If a scroll was an important personal or legal document it would be sealed with hard wax containing the imprint of the senders signet or some other impression. If the seal were broken, the scroll would be considered to have been tampered with.

- In the time in which this event occurred, important documents were written on strips of treated leather or papyrus, where were then stored by being rolled up on a pair of rods from both ends so that the rods met in the middle.

    - All of the Old Testament writings were preserved in this way . . . on scrolls. In fact, in keeping with Jewish tradition, modern-day Jewish synagogues read their Scripture from scrolls that are kept in the same, traditional way.

- The reason we have 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles is because these writings were too long to be kept on 1 scroll. So the writings of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles were broken into 2 parts. The book of Isaiah is the same way . . . Isaiah 1-39 on the first scroll and chapters 40-66 on the second scroll.

What would be significant about the scroll being in the possession of the Father?

- The reason the scroll God is holding is important is because He is the owner of what is contained in the scroll.

  - And as the owner of the scroll, only He has the authority to reveal what is contained within the document.

- We see a Scriptural example of a similar scroll in Jeremiah 32 when Jeremiah purchases a relative's property in order to certify his ownership of a piece of property, even as the Jewish nation is about to be taken into captivity in Babylon.

  - God had instructed Jeremiah to do this as a way of testifying to the Jews the certainty of their return from the Babylonian exile. In Jeremiah 32:14 we see what Jeremiah does with the deed scroll he has purchased . . .

    Jeremiah 32:14— 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time."

Description of the scroll

- First, notice in v. 1 that the scroll is described as ***a scroll written inside and on the back***.

  - The reference to ***inside*** refers to the writing being on the inside of the scroll <u>when it is unrolled</u>. On the other hand, the reference to ***the back*** indicates that there was also writing on the back of the scroll when it was unrolled. **In other words**, there was writing on both sides of the scroll.
  - Because scroll material was expensive, it was common to use all the space available to write on, as indicated here by writing being on both sides of the scroll. We see an example of this in Ezekiel 2:9-10 . . .

    Ezekiel 2:9-10— 9 Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. 10 When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.

- Second, notice that the scroll is described as being ***sealed up with seven seals***.

  - The word ***sealed*** (Greek: *katasphragizō*) means "to close securely with a seal." In antiquity, valuable documents were ***sealed*** to prevent tampering with a document. Seals were typically made with a soft material, such as clay or wax, that could be affixed with the signet of the one sealing it. If the seal was broken, it would be detected. If an attempted to place a false seal was made, the signet impression in the seal would betray the effort.

- The fact that this scroll is ***sealed up with seven seals*** indicates that this document was of such value that a single seal was insufficient to guard this document. Seven seals . . . with seven being the number of God . . . indicate that this was an extremely valuable scroll.

What is contained in the scroll that makes it so valuable and important?

- Though this passage does not explicitly state it, from the evidence that emerges in the following chapters as the seals are broken, it can be inferred that **this scroll is the title deed to the earth**. **More specifically, it is a title deed of redemption**.

  - The title deed to the earth has to do with the principle of **tenant possession**.

- Understanding the principle of **tenant possession** is crucial to understanding the ***seven sealed scroll*** of Revelation 5:1 with respect to the future events of Revelation chapters 6-22 and its relationship to the **slain Lamb** of Revelation 5:6.

What is the Principle of Tenant Possession?

- While God gave the land of Israel to the nation of Israel as an inheritance forever, **the land of Israel belongs to God**. The nation of Israel only possess what they receive from God as **tenant possessors.**

- In Leviticus 25:23 God declares, ***the land is Mine.*** God is the ultimate owner and has all power and authority over the land. He alone has the right to rule and dispense of it for His own benefit in accordance with His own sovereign purpose.

- But not only does the land of Israel belongs to God, but the whole earth and everything in it belongs to Him. He is sole owner and sovereign King.

  Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

- **Scripture records that God gave His people, Israel, the land to possess as an inheritance forever** (Gen. 13: 15; 15:7; Deut. 9:14; Josh 1:2)

  - Nevertheless, God still remains the rightful owner with Israel serving as His representatives, administering His rule over the land for His benefit and in accordance with His sovereign purpose and in obedience to His commands. Theologians summarize it as: **"The land, the law declares properly belongs to Yahweh who is sole landlord, while all the Israelites are but His tenants."**

  - And just as God gave His land of Israel to the people of Israel to possess as an inheritance forever, so too, He gave the earth to mankind to possess as an inheritance forever (Gen 1:26-28; Ps. 115:16; Isa. 24:5-6).

  - Luke 3:38 shows that Adam was God's son. As God's son, Adam inherited God's earth (Gen. 1:28 w/Gen. 2:15-17)

- God, as the landlord, gave man stewardship of the earth and made him tenant possessor of the original title deed to the earth.

  - Commentator Alfred Jenour states it as following: "The earth and all things in it were originally given to Adam and his posterity for a possession. His primeval grant is contained in Gen. 1 :28. Here, then, we have man's original title deed to the possession of the earth. It was given him by God Himself and is recorded in the very commencement of His word."

- The title deed to the possession of the earth signified man as God's representative in administering His rule over the earth for His benefit in accordance with His sovereign purpose and in obedience to His commands (Gen. 2:15-17).

  - **Likewise, God as owner and disposer of the land of Israel, gave tenant possession to the nation of Israel** (Gen. 13:15; 2 Chron. 20:7; Joshua 14-21).

  - But, as a tenant, Israel was forbidden to sell the land forever. After all, it was not their land to sell. In effect, the Israelites could sub-lease their property, but sell it permanently . . . because it wasn't theirs to sell.

    Leviticus 25:23— The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine, for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.

  - Note: The prohibition to sell the land lays in the fact that a tenant cannot sell what he does not own because the land belongs to God.

- If, through mismanagement or other circumstances, an Israelite was forced to sell the portion of land that was his tenant possession, he did not sell ownership of the land. Instead, he sold the tenant possession or administration of the portion of land for a temporary period of time. In other words, he leased his land to another (Lev. 25:25-27).

  - To prevent the sale of tenant possession/administration of the land from being permanent, God established **the year of Jubilee**, which was every 50th year, after seven cycles of seven years (Lev. 25:8-55). It was during this time that any land that had been sold, would return to the original owner (Lev. 25:8-10).

- In the same manner that an Israelite lost tenant possession of his land inheritance because of mismanagement, or as in the case of the whole nation, losing the land to foreign usurpers because of Israel's rebellion against God (Lam. 5:2) there is a sense in which mankind forfeited his inheritance of tenant possession of the earth to Satan when Adam rebelled against God (Gen. 3).

  Luke 4:6— And the devil said to Him, I will give you all this and it's glory, for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

  John 12:31— Now judgment is upon this world, now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.

- Just as the Israelites were forbidden to permanently lose tenant possession/administration of the land, so too, man would not permanently lose tenant possession/administration of the earth (Rev. 20:4-6).

- **Tenant possession was instituted to ensure tribal lands always remained within the original tenant's tribe.**

  "Thus no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another tribe, for the tribes of the sons of Israel shall each hold to his own inheritance (Num. 36:9 w/Num. 27:8-11).

- To aid in land remaining within the assigned tribe of Israel, in Numbers 36:5-9 God established an ordinance that the people marry within their own tribe.

- And just as God made provision that an Israelite not <u>permanently</u> lose his tenant possession of land inheritance to a person outside his tribe, so too, God made provision that mankind not permanently forfeit his tenant possession of the earth to a being outside mankind. In the fall, Adam, a man, <u>temporarily</u> forfeited the earth to Satan, an angel (Luke 4:5,6; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4).

  - But though Satan has <u>temporary</u> authority over the earth, he does not legally own the earth. He is only the temporary ruler, having been given this temporary authority by the true owner of the earth . . . God. **God has given authority to Satan for a time, but God has <u>not</u> given away ownership of the earth.** This is an important distinction we must understand.

Principle of Tenant Possession Exercised in Jeremiah 32

- But this doctrine of **tenant possession** is not a theory or invention of theologians or scholars. It is a practice that God instituted and is found in practice in Scripture. Specifically, we see the practice of **tenant possession** fulfilled in Jeremiah 32.

- **Context of Jeremiah Chapter 32**: The prophet Jeremiah was a prophet of God who ministered in the Southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin shortly before the fall and exile of the Jews to Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon.

  - While imprisoned by King Zedekiah for having prophesied that Jerusalem would fall into the hands of the Babylonians, Jeremiah's nephew, Hanamel, came to Jeremiah and asked Jeremiah to buy or "redeem" his property in Jeremiah's hometown of Anathoth. According to Jewish Law, Jeremiah was the closest kinsman to Hanamel and had the right of redemption if Hanamel chose to sell his land.

  - Prior to Hanamel's arrival, in Jeremiah 32:7 God told Jeremiah that Hanamel was coming to him and that Jeremiah should purchase Hanamel's land. So, despite the fact that the land would soon be taken by the Babylonians, Jeremiah buys Hanamel's land.

  - God instructed Jeremiah to buy Hanamel's land as a sign from God that the Babylonian captivity would not be permanent . . . that the Jewish people would someday return to their ancestral land that God had given them.

  - As proof of purchase, Jeremiah signs and seals the deed of purchase. Because Jeremiah knows the Babylonian captivity will last 70 years (Jer. 25:11, 12; 2 Chron. 36:21), he instructs the scribe, Baruch, to place both the sealed deed and the open deed in an earthenware jar, that

they may last a long time (Jer. 32: 14, 15). Presumably, the jar was put in a safe place until the 70 year captivity was complete.

- **Note:** The sealing of the deed was to prevent anyone from changing its contents. The deed could only be opened by Jeremiah because he paid the redemption price for the land. In addition to the sealed deed, Jeremiah left a second copy unsealed as proof that he had the right of tenant possession (Jer. 32:11, 13, 14). This was especially important because he would not take immediate possession and there was a possibility that his right of possession could be challenged. It was not unusual that "squatters" would occupy the bought land in the intervening time of Jeremiah's absence. Jeremiah, as kinsman redeemer, would break the seal of the deed of purchase, read the scroll and the exercise his right of redemption to include evicting any "squatter" who resisted removal.

- Conclusion: In Jeremiah 32 we see a scroll deed of purchase signifying irrefutable proof of his right to tenant possession. The contents are read specifying <u>what</u> land Jeremiah could exercise authority over.

Significant differences between Jeremiah's deed of purchase and the seven sealed scroll of Revelation 5

- Jeremiah was the legal kinsman, but <u>not</u> the original owner of the land.
- The purchase price: 17 shekels of silver.
- The fact that the deed is signed and sealed was evidence that the transaction had been completed and was legally binding.
- The contents of the deed contained what was purchased, along with the terms and conditions of the purchase.
- There were **2 deeds**; 1 sealed and 1 unsealed. The unsealed deed was proof of ownership.
- As the tenant possessor, Jeremiah must return ownership of the land to the original owner in the year of Jubilee.

- Jesus Christ is <u>both</u> the legal kinsman <u>and</u> the legal owner of the land.
- The purchase price: the blood of Christ.
- The fact of the resurrection of Christ is evidence that God the Father has accepted Christ's blood as the purchase price.
- The contents of the scroll reveal <u>how</u> the land will be inherited, as revealed in Revelation chapters 6-19.
- There was **1 deed**; the ***seven sealed scroll***. By His position at the right hand of the Father, He gives proof of His ownership.
- Ownership of the earth remains with Christ. Satan is the current tenant possessor of the earth, but that possession will end with the opening of the seven sealed scroll, at which time tenant possession will return to man, who was originally given dominion and authority over the earth.

Part 2— Who is Worthy to Open the Scroll?

- With the revelation of the existence of the seven sealed scroll in v. 1 as the title deed to all creation, in v. 2-5 we examine the heavenly question, "who is worthy to open the scroll?"

v. 2— And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

- Employing the same phrase he did in v. 1, John begins v. 2 and the next scene with the phrase, ***and I saw . . . .*** This scene will continue through v. 5.

- **What does John see?** ***A strong angel***.

  - The word ***strong*** (Greek: *ischuros*) means "powerful, mighty and valiant."

  - Though he is not further identified, this identification indicates this is probably one of the chief angels. Some commentators speculate that this is the angel Gabriel, since Gabriel's role is to serve as God's messenger. Others speculate that this is the archangel Michael. But such speculation is foolish and futile. We must be content with this description because **the focus of this passage is not on the angel but on the One who is worthy to open the scroll.**

- **What is the angel described doing?** He is ***proclaiming with a loud voice***.

  - Notice, he is not **speaking** as the other angels in 4:8 and 4:10. Here he is described as ***proclaiming*** (Greek: *kērussō*) meaning "to herald as a public crier; to proclaim or verbally publish." In other words, he is issuing a public proclamation.

- **And what is the angel saying?** He is crying out, ***who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?***

  - The word ***worthy*** (Greek: *axios*) means "deserving or qualified." In the case of ownership, only the owner is ***worthy*** to open a title deed.

  - Notice that this is the second time in Revelation that the figure of speech known as a **hysteron proteron** is used . . . a figure of speech in which, for emphasis, the natural or conventional order of words, actions, or ideas is reversed. We previously saw this figure of speech employed in Revelation 3:19

    Revelation 3:19— 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

    - Though repentance precedes the zeal of faith, for emphasis the Lord reverses the order. In the same way, here in Revelation 5:2 the word order is reversed. Normally the breaking of the seals is the necessary act before the scroll can be opened. But the emphasis and focus in this instance is on ***opening*** and accessing what is in the scroll.

  - The word ***open*** (Greek: *anoigō*) means "not only reveal the contents, but to cause that which is revealed to come to pass." **In other words**, by ***opening*** the scroll, the One who ***opens*** the scroll will also carry out what is revealed in the scroll.

v. 3— And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.

- Then, v. 3 John employs a statement that speaks of the **transcendence** (incomparable supremacy) of God when he says that ***no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth . . .*** This phrase emphasized the disqualification of anyone in creation being qualified to open the scroll.

- Here in v. 3 we see the ***strong angel*** looking out over all the created natural and supernatural realms and seeking to know if any creature is ***worthy*** to break the seals and open the scroll.

    - And in response to his searching ***loud voice***, the answer in v. 3 is that ***no one . . .*** **no human nor angel . . .** ***in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able***.

    - The word ***able*** (Greek: *dunamai*) is the verb form of the word *dunamis*, meaning "power." In other words, **the verb *dunamai* speaks of "having the power and authority" to open the scroll**.

    - And the answer to the ***strong angel's*** inquiry is that there is ***no one*** who **has the power and authority to open the scroll.**

    - The use of the **imperfect tense** in the verb ***able*** indicates that this condition of ***no one*** **being *able* to open the scroll** is **a chronic condition that has always existed**. **In other words**, **no one has <u>ever</u> been able to open this scroll.**

- The reference to any ***<u>in</u> heaven or <u>on</u> the earth or <u>under</u> the earth*** speaks of <u>all</u> of the created order.

    - Nowhere in the universe, even among the dead (***under the earth***) was there found anyone who was **ever** worthy to open the scroll.

- The point of v. 3 is that if ***no one*** was found who was ***able*** to open the scroll, no one could look into the scroll to read its contents.

    - And since the scroll is the title deed to the earth, if no one was worthy to open the scroll to exert his authority as owner of the earth, **Satan could not be legally evicted from his position as tenant possessor of the earth.**

v. 4— Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

- Then, in v. 4 we see John's response to the failure of ***the strong angel*** to find anyone who is worthy to open the scroll . . . John ***began to weep greatly***.

    - The description of ***weeping greatly*** describes the act of sobbing loudly and uncontrollably. Such great ***weeping*** is the physical response to great distress and an overwhelming flood of emotion. The cause of John's weeping is his realization that no one could be found and that this very important scroll could not be opened. And if the scroll remained sealed, not only would Satan remain the tenant possessor of the earth, but that evil would continue to rule and reign

and both Israel and the church would not be vindicated. This would, truly, have been a bitter disappointment.

- John's weeping is this verse is significant because this is the only time in Scripture that we see someone shedding tears in heaven.

    - Remember, John has seen much in his life . . . Jesus crucified on the cross . . . the church persecuted and his brother, James, martyred . . . Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans . . . the Jews scattered after the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, with ***no one found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it***, would God's program be delayed? John wept bitterly at the thought.

- But notice that there is no description of any of the angels in heaven weeping. Only John. Why?

v. 5— and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

- So, with John ***weeping greatly*** because of his despair over the fact that there was no one worthy to open the scroll, we then read in v. 5 that an angel . . . one of the 24 elders . . . comes up to John and commands him to ***stop weeping***.

    - ***Stop weeping*** is not a word of comfort or consolation. It is a command to **"cease this weeping of yours. Instead, look!"**

- With his instruction to ***behold***, the angel then points John's attention to ***the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah***.

    - From Genesis 49:9, this title is one of the titles of Jesus Christ.

      Genesis 49:9— "Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?

    - The Lord's description as being like a ***lion*** emphasizes His kingly might and boldness, His majesty, strength and courage. The Lord, as the Great King, has the might and power and will to defeat Satan and to reclaim possession of the earth and to rule over it in righteousness.

- The second title of the Lord we see in v. 5 is that of ***the Root of Jesse***. We find this title of the Lord in Isaiah 11:10 and referred to by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:3 . . .

    Isaiah 11:10— Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

    Romans 1:3— concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh

    - The term ***root*** (Greek: *rhiza*) is used metaphorically to refer to "offspring." And here in Revelation 5:5 the progenitor who is spoken of is ***Jesse***, the father of King David.

- We learn in the genealogy of Jesus that His mother, Mary, and His supposed father, Joseph, were both descendants of David.

- Though Joseph was not His biological father, as his legal son, Jesus was thus considered an heir of Joseph and in the Royal Line of David through Solomon to Joseph.

- At the same time, Jesus' mother, Mary, was a descendant of David through David's third son, Nathan. As a descendant of David through Mary, Jesus was thus also a **physical descendant of David**.

- Then, having identified the Lord as ***the Lion of the tribe of Judah*** and ***the Root of Jesse***, the angel then describes **what the Lord has done . . . He has *overcome***.

  - The word ***overcome*** (Greek: *nikaō*) means "to subdue, conquer, prevail or **be victorious**."

  - The reason, as the angel tells John, for him to ***stop weeping*** is because **Jesus has overcome . . . Jesus is victorious**.

- **What is Jesus victorious over?** We find the answer in Scripture . . .

  John 16:32-33— 32 "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

  Romans 12:2— Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

  1 John 5:4— For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

  - By His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus has ***overcome*** everything. He has conquered sin and death . . . He has conquered evil and the world forces of darkness . . . He has conquered evil. All that stands in opposition to God has been ***overcome*** and **conquered** by the Lord Jesus.

- **Why is the Lord's victory important?**

  - The Lord's victory, as stated here in v. 5, is important because **it qualifies Him to break the seals on the scroll and to open and read the contents of the scroll.**

Part Three— The Lamb of God appears

v. 6— And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

- With the phrase, ***and I saw***, v. 6 begins the third scene of this chapter.

- In v. 6 note John's description of the scene around God's throne . . . ***I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain . . . .***

- The Greek term that is translated ***between*** (Greek: *en mesos*) literally means "in the midst of" or "in the center of."

- **In other words**, while the angelic creatures surround God's throne, the ***Lamb*** is **"in the midst of God's throne."** The ***Lamb*** is not separated from the throne, but is part of or "in the midst of" God's throne. We see a similar description of the ***Lamb's*** position in Revelation 7:17 in which the same Greek word (*mesos*) is used . . .

  Revelation 7:17— for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

- The word ***Lamb*** (Greek: *amion*) is a term that refers to a small lamb. This description would have been very familiar to a Jewish reader because of the teaching in Exodus 12:3-6 regarding the Passover lamb . . .

  Exodus 12:3-6— 3 "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 4 Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

  - In preparation for the Passover every Jewish family is to take the Passover lamb and keep it in the house for 4 days leading up to it being slaughtered.

  - The Passover lamb in the Old Testament was intended by God to be a type and point to the perfect Lamb who would be sacrificed for the sins of all the redeemed.

- While Jesus Christ is only referred to as a ***Lamb*** **once in the Old Testament** (Isaiah 53:7), He is referred to as the ***Lamb*** **four times in the New Testament outside of Revelation** and **31 times within the book of Revelation**.

- **Why is Jesus referred to as the *Lamb* so many times in Revelation?**

  - Because it was His sacrificial death that qualifies Him to open the scroll and to evict Satan and evil from the earth. All of Revelation 6-19 describes the process that is written in the scroll.

- **How is the *Lamb* described?**

  - Paradoxically, ***the Lamb*** is described as ***standing, as if slain***. At first glance this description appears to be contradictory. How can someone be ***standing*** if they have been ***slain*** (killed)?

- There are two important components to the description of the ***Lamb*** as ***standing, as if slain***.

  - First, the description of the ***Lamb standing*** emphasizes the fact that **Jesus is alive. He has been resurrected to life, just as Scripture teaches us.** Jesus is not a dead Savior. He is alive.

- Second, the description of ***as if slain*** (Greek: *sphazō*) is a graphic word. It means "to butcher or slaughter." And the fact that Jesus is described in this way indicates that **in this scene in heaven He still bore the physical appearance from His crucifixion.**

- It is interesting to note that the graphic term ***slain*** (Greek: *sphazō*) is the same word John uses to describe Cain's killing of his brother, Abel, in 1 John 3:12 . . .

  1 John 3:12— not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

  - Both passages describe the bloody result of a man having been brutally murdered . . . slaughtered . . . in a most vile manner.

- John then proceeds to further describe the Lord as ***having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.***

  - The term ***horns*** (Greek: *keras*) refers to the ***horns*** of an animal but is used symbolically to refer to the "strength and power" of Christ. We see a similar usage in 1 Samuel 2:10, where the first mention of the Jewish Messiah appears in Scripture . . .

    1 Samuel 2:10— "Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens, the LORD will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed."

  - In later Old Testament books the term ***horn*** is used to symbolize dynastic force or kingly dignity and is used this way in Revelation (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 12).

- When combined with the divine number ***seven***, the description of the ***Lamb having seven horns*** signifies the complete divine power and authority the ***Lamb*** possesses.

- The further description of the ***Lamb*** having ***seven eyes*** symbolizes the omniscience of the ***Lamb***. The divine ***Lamb*** sees and knows everything. This omniscience of God is further described at the end of v. 6 . . . ***seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.***

  - As we saw in Revelation 4:5, the ***seven Spirits of God*** refers to the Holy Spirit in His divine fullness, present and prescient everywhere, simultaneously.

- The reference to the Holy Spirit being ***sent out into all the earth*** speaks of the economic trinity. The Father sent the Son into the world to pay the redemption price. The Son then sends the Holy Spirit into the world to redeem those whom the Father elects. Each member of the Trinity plays His agreed-up role in the salvation process.

  - It is now the Holy Spirit who is operative in the world, saving and sanctifying those whom the Father chose and for whom the Son died. We see evidence of the Holy Spirit's mission in John 16:7-8 . . .

    John 16:7-8— 7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

Question: Why does ***the strong angel*** ask ***"Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"*** if he already knows the answer?

_____

v. 7— And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

- Having determined in v. 1-5 that no one ***in heaven, on earth or under the earth*** was worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll, we now see the Lord Jesus appear in the scene.

- We know from Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1 and Hebrews 1:3, that following His ascension, the Lord took His rightful place at the right hand of God, where He sits today. And since the Lord is already seated at the right hand of the Father, the statement in v. 7 that describes that ***He came and took the book*** does <u>not</u> signify Him moving forward to take the scroll, but rather, **He merely positions Himself to receive it from the Father's hand**.

    - We see **this same scene** described in Daniel 7:13-14 . . .

      Daniel 7:13-14— 13 "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. 14 And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

    - In fact, Daniel 7:13-14 is a synopsis of Revelation chapter 5.

- The second thing we see the Lord do is ***take the book out of the hand of Him who sat on the throne***.

    - Only the One who has the right to open the scroll would be so bold as to take something from the hand of God. Therefore, the **"taking"** of the scroll by the Lord is significant because <u>only He</u> was worthy to do so.

v. 8— When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

- Then, having taken the scroll from the Father's hand, we see the response of those present in the throne room . . . ***the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb***.

    - Notice that the response of the angels is to render worship and they ***fall down before the Lamb***.

    - In Revelation 4:10 we saw the angels ***fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever***. This describes their worship of **God the Father**. Now, in Revelation 5:8 this same worship is rendered to the Son of God, giving evidence that the Lamb of God <u>is</u> God.

- **What prompts this act of worship?**

  - The taking of the scroll is the recognition by the angelic host that ***the Lamb*** is worthy to open the scroll and that by opening it He will initiate God's program to usher in His kingdom. This recognition of **the Lamb's worthiness** prompts their worship.

- It is significant to note that although the Lord Jesus is presently at the Father's right hand, He is not yet fully reigning. As we read in Psalm 2:8 . . .

  Psalm 2:8— "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession."

  - In this statement we learn that the earth is promised to the Lord as His possession. Therefore, He will not be fully reigning until His kingdom is established on the earth.

- As Donald Gray Barnhouse points out in his commentary on Revelation, **there are 4 things that are currently out of place in the universe:**

  1. The church should be in heaven.
  2. Israel should be living in peace occupying all the land God promised to her.
  3. Satan should be consigned to the Lake of Fire.
  4. Jesus Christ should be reigning on the earth.

  - All four of these situations will begin to be set right when Christ takes the scroll from the Father's hand and begins to break the seals.

- In v. 8 notice the two items that are being held by the angels . . . ***the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.***

  - The ***harp*** (Greek: *kithara*) was an instrument that was frequently associated with Old Testament worship (see 2 Sam. 6:5; 1 Chron. 15:16, 20, 28; 16:5; 2 Chron. 5:12; 29:25; Ps. 33:2; 71:22).

    - The ***harp*** is associated with joy and gladness (1 Chron. 25:1, 6; 2 Chron. 29:25).

    - The ***harp*** is connected with prophecy (1 Sam 10:5; 1: Chron. 25:3).

    - In Revelation ***harps*** used to describe celestial music (Rev. 14:2; 15:2).

  - The second items are ***gold bowls full of incense***. These bowls were used in the tabernacle and in the temple (1 Kings 7:40, 45, 50; 2 Kings 12:13, 14; 1 Chron. 28:17; 2 Chron. 4:22; Jer. 52:19; Zech. 14:20). They were associated with the altar, symbolizing the priestly work of intercession on behalf of the Israelites.

  - The ***bowls*** were used for offering incense and were containers with a large open mouth.

- **What is significant about the incense?**

  - Incense was associated with the Hebrew ritual where the efficacy of an offering was acceptable when accompanied by incense.

- What did the incense represent?

  - As v. 8 states, the ***bowls full of incense are the prayers of the saints***.

    Psalm 141:2— May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.

    Luke 1:10— And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

- There is a view in Judaism that angels were carriers of the prayers of men. We see this affirmed in Revelation 8:3 . . .

  Revelation 8:3— Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

  - Revelation 5:8 and 8:3 both aid the argument that the ***elders*** were angels.

- **Interpretive question: Are these general prayers or specific prayers?**

  - The context of the book of Revelation seems to support the view that these prayers are specific, with respect to the tribulation . . . prayers that seek sending forth the judgment of God and the ushering in of His kingdom.

    Luke 18:7-8— 8 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

  - Also, compare with Revelation 8:3-5 . . .

    Revelation 8:3-5— 3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

  - Also, compare with Revelation 6:10 . . .

    Revelation 6:10— and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

- In this verse the martyrs petition God for judgment upon their murderers. This also adds to the case that these prayers are specific to the tribulation.

- **Who are the "saints" in view here? Two views are offered.**

  - **First, it is suggested that these are "saints" throughout the church age.**

    - Against this view is the sense that these saints would all be in heaven and praise rather than prayer for a specific need would be their focus.

  - **Second, that these are "tribulation saints" of Revelation 6-19** (souls under the altar)

    - Having been martyred, they have special cause to pray for vindication as the tribulation progresses. There will be saints who witness the atrocities of antichrist (Rev. 12:17; 13:7-10) and will be the objects of antichrist's persecution, resulting in their martyrdom.

    - View #2 is preferred. Revelation 5:8 symbolizes the prayers of the yet-to-be martyred saints of the tribulation. It is preparatory to the opening of the 7-sealed scroll and furnishes a hint as to the point these prayers will play once the tribulation begins.

v. 9— And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

- In v. 9 we see that as a result of the Lamb taking the scroll from the Father's hand, it prompts ***a new song***.

- **First of all, who sings the song?**

  - There are **28 singers** at the beginning of this scene . . . **4 living beings and 24 elders**. But by the end of the song the number increased to include **all of creation**, as we read in v. 13.

- **What is "new" about this song?**

  - The word ***new*** (Greek: *kainos*) **refers to the quality of a thing, not "new" in reference to time**. **In other words**, this song is ***new*** in nature . . . different from the previous songs of worship. Remember, the song sung by the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures in chapter 4 had to do with celebrating God as Creator. **This song celebrates God as Redeemer**.

- **Examination of the new song**

  - In examining this ***new song***, note the theme of the song is found in the first word of the song . . . ***worthy***. The word ***worthy*** (Greek: *axios*) means "having weight," or "of much worth and value."

  - Just as God the Father is worshipped and declared ***worthy*** in Revelation 4:11, so too, the Lamb is worshipped in Revelation 5:8 and now declared ***worthy*** in v. 9.

- The basis of the Lamb's worthiness to take the scroll and to break its seals is two-fold:

- First, the redemption price has been paid . . . ***for You were slain, and purchased . . . .***

- The word ***purchase*** (Greek: *agorazō*) was a term used of the marketplace, meaning "to buy." The KJV translation of the word, "redeem," is <u>not</u> an accurate translation. Here in v. 9 *agorazō* means "to pay the required price to buy something."

- Figuratively, Christ is spoken of having bought His redeemed, making them His property at the price of His blood (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1; Rev. 14:3-4).

- This idea of ***purchasing*** our salvation goes back to the concept of the **kinsman redeemer**. By having paid the purchase price, Jesus Christ has bought back what Adam lost in the Garden of Eden. This concept is also affirmed in Psalm 49:7-9 . . .

  Psalm 49:7-9— 7 No man can by any means redeem his brother
  Or give to God a ransom for him—
  8 For the redemption of his soul is costly,
  And he should cease trying forever—
  9 That he should live on eternally,
  That he should not undergo decay.

- **In other words**, no human born of Adam is <u>able</u> to pay a ransom price sufficient to deliver himself or another from the grave.

  Psalm 49:15— But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
  For He will receive me. Selah.

- Note: the Hebrew word, translated ***selah***, is a word of uncertain meaning. It is found 71 times in the Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk chapter 3. Because the Psalms were meant to be sung, the meaning of this imperative is thought to mean "lift up," equivalent to "loud" or "fortissimo," a direction to the accompanying musicians to break in at the place marked with crash of cymbals and blare of trumpets, the orchestra playing an interlude while the singers' voices were hushed.

- **But how did God redeem us?**

  - **By the death of Christ, as the purchase price to satisfy His wrath against sin.** See Romans 6:23 . . .

    Romans 6:23— For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

  - Sin is personified as having worked in every child of Adam to earn a wage. And having worked, sin is due the wages it has earned. And the wages that sin has earned is death. God is bound by His nature to pay to sin what it has earned. That payment to sin was the death of His Son, which resulted in redemption.

- The ***new song*** in Revelation 5:9 seems to expand the redemption from sin alone, to the redemption from <u>all</u> hostile power.

- The songs of redemption in Rev. 14:2-3 (the 144,000 witnesses) and 15:2-4 (the tribulation saints) pertain to redemption from the forces of the beast.

- The context of the song speaks of freedom that results in the creation of a new people of God to rule upon the earth (***Revelation 5:10— "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."***)

- **To whom was the purchase price paid?**

  - While Romans 6:23 personifies sin, the purchase price that Jesus Christ paid was actually made to God the Father. **Christ died for God, and God accepted Christ's purchase price**. We, the elect, are the beneficiaries of Christ's atonement sacrifice for sin.

    Isaiah 53:6— But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

    Isaiah 53:10— But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering

  - The purchase price Jesus Christ paid was His own blood and His life. God paid, to Himself, the debt that sin was owed, so that His wrath would be satisfied and His justice upheld.

  - **The payment that satisfied His wrath . . . the <u>only</u> payment that could <u>ever</u> satisfy His wrath . . . was the death of His Son.**

    Hebrews 9:13-14— 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

    Hebrews 9:22— And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

- **For whom did Christ die to purchase?**

  - As we read in Revelation 5:9, Jesus Christ ***purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.***

  - It is interesting to note that these 4 categories . . . ***tribe, tongue, people and nation*** . . . appear 4 more times in Revelation (7:9, 11:9, 13:7, 14:6) but not in the same order as they do here in 5:9.

  - The term ***tribe*** (Greek: *phulē*) refers to a company of people united by kinship or habitation . . . a clan. The idea is that they are of the same **genetic descent**.

  - The term ***tongue*** (Greek: *glōssa*) refers to people who speak the **same language**, regardless of kinship.

  - The term ***people*** (Greek: *laos*) refers to people of the **same race and language**.

- The term ***nation*** (Greek: *ethnos*) refers to those people who are bound together by political unity or, more broadly, by **habits, customs and peculiarities** . . . **the same culture**.

- These 4 categories . . . ***tribe, tongue, people and nation*** . . . refers to <u>all</u> of mankind.

v. 10— "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

- Having first been declared worthy to take and open the scroll for having paid the redemption price in v. 9, in v. 10 we see **the second reason for Christ's worthiness to open the scroll** . . . ***"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."***

  - Not only did Jesus Christ pay the redemption price for the salvation of the elect, but after He had purchased us with His blood He ***made us to be a kingdom and priests to our God***.

  - And the means by which Christ has ***made us to be*** is through the work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration and sanctification.

  - We see this same theme of Christ's work on behalf of the elect in Revelation 1:6 and 20:6.

    Revelation 1:6— and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

    Revelation 20:6— Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

- Grammatically, it is significant to note in v. 10 that the 24 elders and 4 living creatures say that ***you have made <u>them</u> to be a kingdom and priests . . . .*** If the 24 elders were redeemed men, they would have used the pronoun **<u>us</u>** in v. 10.

- In v. 10 the term ***kingdom*** (Greek: *basileia*) refers to "the territory or people over whom a king rules." In v. 10 the term denotes believers under God's sovereign rule. He is our King. We are His ***kingdom*** and His co-regents in our service to God in ruling over the nations (Revelation 2:26-27).

  Revelation 2:26-27— 26 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; 27 and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father;'

- In v. 10 when the angels refer to the redeemed as ***priests*** (Greek: *hiereus*), this denotes our full and immediate access into God's presence for the purpose of praise and worship. The <u>present</u> priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9) foreshadows what is to come.

  1 Peter 2:5, 9— 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

- In the last phrase of v. 10, in which the angels declare that ***they will reign upon the earth***, this is a reference to the fact that in glory we will continue to serve God is some capacity of reigning. We see this stated in Revelation 22:5 and by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:12.

  Revelation 22:5— And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

  2 Timothy 2:12— If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

- While Scripture reveals that we will be reigning on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom, it is not stated specifically in what capacity our "reigning" will occur in the eternal state. We will have to wait for that to be revealed in glory. All we can know is that we will be serving God in glory.

- **Part Four— The Song of the Heavenly Host**

v. 11— Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

- With the phrase, ***then I looked***, the scene shifts again. And as the scene shifts, John begins by noting that ***I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders***.

  - Where the throne of God was previously described in Revelation 4 as being encircled by the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures, the scene now expands outward and John both **sees *many angels*** and **hears** their ***voices***.

- **How many angels does John see?**

  - In v. 11 John describes the number of angels as ***myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands***. This description is not meant to define a specific number, but to emphasize that the angelic host now present was more than he could possibly number. We see this same description of the number of the angelic host present at the judgment throne of God in Daniel 7:9-10…

    Daniel 7:9-10— 9 "I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. 10 A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened.

- **Because of the significance of this event, it is very likely that <u>every elect angel is now present</u> to render worship as the *Lamb* prepares to open the scroll.**

v. 12— saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

- In v. 12 we see that the entire heavenly host, in unison, is ***saying with a loud voice . . .***

    - The word ***saying*** (Greek: *legō*) can mean either a spoken voice or in song. In unison we read that the voices of the angelic host are ***a loud voice***. The word ***loud*** (Greek: *megas*) means "great or abundant."

        - You can form a mental picture of millions of angels, speaking or singing with one "mega" voice. It would have filled heaven and would be the most heavenly and worshipful sound one could imagine.

- Here in v. 12 we see the heavenly host affirming that the slain Lamb is truly worthy to take the scroll and break its 7 seals. He is also worthy to receive recognition for **7 specific qualities**.

- In the phrase, ***worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive***, the meaning of the word ***receive*** must be correctly understood.

    - The word ***receive*** (Greek: *lambanō*) means "to take or to receive." When this verse states that the Lamb ***receives power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing***, **this does <u>not</u> imply that Christ did not already possess them**. All seven of these glorious qualities <u>were already present</u> in Christ. **This doxology is simply praising and worshipping the Lamb in recognition and affirmation of these qualities**.

        - As one commentator notes, "the analogy of other doxologies shows the meaning <u>not</u> to be that God has <u>given</u> Christ the seven qualities or powers in the list, but rather, that **Christ is worthy to receive adoration for these things <u>that He already possessed</u>**."

- Here in this statement we see part of the reason God has done, and is doing, the things that He does. In the creation God is able to more fully manifest those qualities that He already possesses, but to a fuller degree.

The seven listed qualities— *power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing*

Power (Greek: *dunamis*) refers to the **omnipotence** of Christ . . . His absolute power to do that which He decrees to do.

Riches (Greek: *ploutos*) refers to both the infinite spiritual good that He is endowed with.

Wisdom (Greek: *sophia*) refers to that attribute of God that demonstrates itself in the conscious and purposeful creation and government of the world in the perfect execution of His will. To believers, Christ <u>is</u> the wisdom of God, as stated in 1 Corinthians 1:24 . . .

> ***1 Corinthians 1:24— but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.***

Might (Greek: *ischus*) is similar to ***power***, but focuses more on the **sovereignty** of God in exercise of his power.

Honor (Greek: *timē*) refers to the incomparable value of Christ.

Glory (Greek: *doxa*) refers to the divine and heavenly radiance; the loftiness and majesty of God. God's glory is the summation or fullness of all His attributes together.

Blessing (Greek: *eulogia*) refers to that quality of Christ evoking **man's thankful response** for benefits received. Christ's intrinsic worth and praiseworthiness make Him worthy of our worship and words of praise as we acknowledge His glory.

- As one commentator notes: "The analogy of other doxologies shows the meaning <u>not</u> to be that God has <u>given</u> Christ the 7 capabilities and powers in the list, but it is rather that Christ is worthy to receive adoration for these things that He already possesses." — Beckwith

v. 13— And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

- With the angelic doxology finished, we now see the company of singers broaden to incorporate the whole creation.
    - The focus of Revelation 4 is God the Father
    - The focus of Revelation 5:1-12 is on the Lamb
    - Now, in Revelation 5:13-14 the focus of the worshippers is on **both**, in one great, closing doxology.
- In v. 13 we see **a list of worshippers** . . . ***every created thing which is . . .***
    - ***in heaven . . .***
    - ***on the earth . . .***
    - ***under the earth . . .***
    - ***on the sea . . .***
    - ***and all things in them***
    - In other words, the praise is exhaustive. It encompasses <u>all</u> intelligent life, to include the fallen angels imprisoned ***under the earth*** (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), and unredeemed man consigned to judgment (Philippians 2:9-11).
- This song anticipates that day when <u>every</u> knee will bow in submission to God.

Psalm 150:6— Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

The context of the song

- In v. 13 we see those who are the objects of praise and worship . . . ***To Him who sits on the throne, <u>and</u> to the Lamb***

- **Both God the Father and God the Son** . . . the Lamb . . . are the objects of the worship of all creation.

- The theological implication of this statement in v. 13 is that **the throne that is spoken of is the throne of <u>both</u> God the Father <u>and</u> the Lamb.**

- The important point is, worship that is offered to one is worship offered to the other.

What are the worshippers saying?

- Having identified <u>who</u> these new worshippers are and <u>who</u> they are worshipping, at the end of v. 13 we learn what these worshippers are saying. It is a 4-fold doxology, praising God for his . . .

  blessing— the same word used in v. 12
  honor— the same word used in v. 12
  glory— the same word used in v. 12
  dominion, the Greek word *kratos* means "might, active power (as opposed to ***might*** in v. 12, which is a reserve of secret strength). ***Dominion*** implies **"ruling with power"** and anticipates the coming judgments.

- And as the final phrase in v. 13 states, the length of this worship of all creatures will be ***forever and ever*** . . . eternity.

The response of the angels attending God

v. 14— And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshipped.

- In v. 14 we see the response of the two different classes of angels to the worship of creation

- First, we see the response of the ***four living creatures . . .*** they ***kept saying, "Amen."***

  - The verb translated ***kept saying*** indicates continual action. In other words, the angelic response of ***"amen"*** is the continual response of the ***four living creatures*** in response to the continual, eternal praise of God.

  - In effect, the ***"amen"*** of the ***four living creatures*** is an affirmation of the praise of all creation.

- Second, we see the response of ***the [24] elders*** . . . they ***fell down and worshipped***.

  - This is the third time we see ***the twenty-four elders*** **"fall down"** in worship.

    Revelation 4:10— the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne

    Revelation 5:8— When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

- We have come to the end of the scene in heaven (chapters 4-5). Now, beginning in chapter 6, and going through chapter 19, we see the sequence of events as the Lamb begins to break each of the seven seals on the scroll, which begins the process of opening the scroll and evicting Satan from his position as tenant possessor.

Discussion Questions

- Looking at chapters 4 & 5, what do you see as the purpose for what John is shown in heaven?
- Where does Revelation 5:13-14 fit in the timeline of events, before or after the tribulation? Why?
- What about unbelievers and fallen angels, will they also render this worship?