

## 26.01.2019 WORTHY IS THE LAMB

***But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain...Revelation 5:5, 6***

Our study for this week is Revelation chapters 4 and 5. Revelation 4 is a description of worship directed to God who sits on the throne in heaven. It focuses on worshipping God as Creator. Revelation 5 moves to the worship of the Lamb as Redeemer and culminates with praise and worship of 'Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever'.

From Revelation 4 onwards the visions of John are written in more symbolic language. Though sometimes difficult to interpret, a careful study will recognise similar language in the Old Testament and this helps to give us a proper understanding of Revelation.

### **Revelation 4:**

In Revelation 4 is a description of continuity. God sits upon His throne eternally and His creatures offer perpetual praise to Him.

### **The Heavenly Throne Room:**

***After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." (4:1)***

John sees a door standing open in heaven. The door is not necessarily a literal door. An open door signifies that one is granted entrance. So John is granted entrance to the heavenly throne room; the most Holy place where God Himself dwells. Sinful man cannot stand in the presence of a holy God. We must remember the words of Jesus: 'I am the door; by me if any man enter in he will be saved' John 10:9.

And Paul calls us to enter with boldness into the very presence of God, through the blood of Christ. By His sacrifice, when His flesh was torn, He removed the veil which separated sinful man from God.

*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh. Hebrews 10:19, 20*

*And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Mark 15:37, 38 (also Matthew 27:50, 51 and Luke 23:44, 45).*

***Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (4:2, 3)***

The throne of God symbolises God's authority over His universe; His creation. The rainbow around the throne reminds us that God is the God of the everlasting covenant. He has bound Himself to us by a covenant and will remain faithful to all His promises... 'If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.' 2 Timothy 2:13.

The covenant is not only the covenant after the flood; it is the everlasting covenant by which God guarantees the redemption and salvation of man.

*God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability (unchangeableness) of His counsel, confirmed (guaranteed) it by an oath, that by two immutable (unchangeable) things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an*

*anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus. Hebrews 6:17-20*

No human can fully describe the splendour of God; so John uses the terms 'like a...' or 'the appearance of...' Ezekiel 1:26-28 and Exodus 24:9-11 are other passages that describe the splendour and glory of God.

***And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...(4:5, 6)***

#### **The Heavenly Assembly in the Throne Room:**

***And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. (4:6, 7)***

***Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (4:4)***

The four living creatures are exalted beings (Psalm 99:1 calls them the cherubim; cherubim also surrounded the Shekinah glory in the Most Holy place of the Tabernacle) who serve as God's agents, messengers and guardians of His throne. Their wings are symbolic of their swiftness in carrying out God's commands and their eyes are symbolic of wisdom and intelligence.

Jewish tradition says the "four standards" (Numbers 2:17, 34) under which Israel encamped in the wilderness, to the east, Judah, to the north, Dan, to the west, Ephraim, to the south, Reuben, were respectively a lion, an eagle, an ox, and a man, while in the midst was the tabernacle containing the Shekinah symbol of the Divine Presence. Some commentators believe that the 4 living creatures having the same faces are symbolic of God's interest in mankind and also that it is symbolic of the character of Christ Jesus in relation to man... He is a lion, He is the Son of man, He is the greatest sacrifice, and He is the eagle who brings judgment (Jeremiah 49:22).

The twenty four elders are not angels; they are human beings. In Revelation 5:9 they sing, 'You have redeemed US to God by your blood'. They are clothed in white robes, given to God's faithful people... 'He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments' Revelation 3:5. The crowns (Greek: *stephanos*) of gold are given to those who are victorious... *Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown (stephanos) of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 1:12* (see also 2 Timothy 4:8, 1 Peter 5:4).

#### **Continual Worship before the Throne:**

***The four living creatures...do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"***

***Whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for (because) You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." (4:8-11)***

In this passage we learn about true worship. We worship God "because...". We worship God because of who He is; Jehovah, the great I AM, the Creator of the Universe.

In Revelation 4, God the Holy and Eternal One, is worthy of worship. He is worthy to receive glory and honour and power because He has created all things. He has chosen to create all things. It is by His will they are created and by His power they are sustained.

## Revelation 5:

Revelation 5 describes a one-time event; a crisis in heaven and how it is resolved. The only crisis in the universe occurred when sin entered the universe. When Adam and Eve sinned, they handed over their dominion to Satan and he became the Prince and Ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

We see in Revelation 5, the entire unfallen universe gathered to see the opening of the sealed scroll. Since only Christ was worthy to open it, it is reasonable to recognise that in the scroll was God's plan for the redemption and re-creation of mankind and the defeating of Satan. The only one who could open it was the One who had made it possible for mankind to again have entrance to the throne of God. Jesus Christ, by His death and resurrection has become the Door by which we have entry to heaven. We have boldness to enter into the Most Holy by His blood (Hebrews 10:19-23).

***And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. (5:1-3)***

'No-one in heaven or earth or under the earth' refers to the unfallen beings who had the right to enter the Throne room.

***So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. (5:4)***

This scene occurs just before Christ ascends to heaven, to present to His Father His sacrifice for mankind and His victory over Satan.

***But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." (5:5)***

There is no reason to weep; here is the language of victory. The Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David has triumphed; He has overcome sin and death and the Devil and He has prevailed. He is therefore able to open the sealed scroll. He has overcome and been granted to sit on His Father's throne, at the Father's right hand.

With prophetic vision, David gave us the song that welcomed the Lion of Judah to His Father's throne room:

*Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be ye lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.  
Who is this King of glory?*

*The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.*

*Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.*

*Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Psalm 24:7-10*

***And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. (5:6, 7)***

*"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me..." Isaiah 63:1-3*

Instead of a Lion, John sees a Lamb. The Lion who has triumphed is the Lamb; the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29); the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Because He has poured out His life in death, God has given Him all authority and power (the symbol of the seven horns). That power is available to His people on earth through His Spirit. Because He is glorified, the Spirit is poured forth as rain; the early rain (Pentecost) and the latter rain. Out of the hearts of His people will flow rivers of living water (John 7:37-39).

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Matthew 28:18 That you may know...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:18-23*

### **Worthy is the Lamb!**

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying:

***"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."* (5:8-10)**

The first to worship the lamb are the 24 elders, human beings and the four living beings. The Lamb is worthy of worship **because** He has redeemed mankind **by His blood...without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22).**

Next, the angels join in worshipping the Lamb who was slain.

***Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!" (5:11, 12)***

Then all the creatures of the universe join in a four-fold doxology to praise the Father and His Son, the Christ.

*And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:*

***"Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" (5:13, 14).***

***And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.***

Those who have been redeemed from the earth, saved from sin and suffering and eternal death, will spend eternity worshipping the Lamb. Is He not worthy of our worship today?

### **Conclusion:**

In the great cosmic conflict between Satan and God, Satan will not have the last word (he is nowhere to be seen in Revelation 4 and 5, for he has been cast down – Revelation 12:10). Sin and Death will not have the last word. God will have the last word. His Son has triumphed over the Devil and his works; He has destroyed the last enemy, Death.

***But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:20-22***

*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Hebrews 10:35-37*

### **Additional Notes:**

## **The Symbolism of 'Twenty Four' in Revelation:**

The 24 elders are symbolic of redeemed humanity.

The number 24 is symbolic: it consists of two sets of 12, the number 12 in the Bible being a symbol of God's people. The 24 elders could represent God's people in their totality, from both the Old and New Testament times. The number 24 also mirrors the chiefs of the 24 divisions of priests who took turns serving in the earthly temple services (1 Chron. 24:1–19).

The fact that the 24 elders were never mentioned before in the Bible implies that they are a new group in the heavenly throne room. They perhaps are the ones who were raised from the dead at the time of Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51–53).

### Biblical evidence for these assertions:

In Matthew 19:28, Jesus tells His disciples that they will sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. This verse ties together the number 12, thrones, the apostles, and the 12 tribes. In Revelation 21:12, the names of the 12 tribes are written on the gates of the New Jerusalem, while the 12 foundations have the names of the 12 apostles written on them (Rev. 21:14).

The number 24 adds 12 to 12, as occurs in Revelation 21. In Revelation 7:4–8, furthermore, the people of God are described in terms of 12 times 12 times 1,000 (144,000). The multiple of 12 is seen also in the height of the walls of the New Jerusalem, 144 cubits (Rev. 21:17).

So the best explanation of the 24 elders is that they represent the people of God in both Old and New Testaments.

*-Ranko Stefanovic*

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