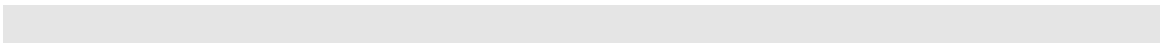


Week 6

Revelation 4 -5 the believer and judgment.



The Transition

Revelation 4:1 (NIV)

¹ *After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."*

1

We have now entered the segment of the book that deals with the things to come. The “*what will take place later*” from chapter 1:18. We begin by determining what “after this” means and when it occurs. Since the phrase is used twice in the text it transitions us forward from the letters to the churches, a then present tense to a new conversation. It also transitions us to the new idea in the outline. While the phrase seems small and inconsequential we can say that it establishes:

An undetermined period of time. – The first use of the phrase establishes that we are some time after the delivery of the admonitions to the 7 churches. The second usage gives us an unknown time frame.

A future time – We can also conclude that the time frame is well in the future. The question is when is this to take place?

Since we know that the word “church” is not used in the book of Revelation after chapter 3 and

Since we know that the undetermined time could embrace a prophetic perspective and

Since the next major event in OT prophecy is the last week of Daniel 9

We could conclude that these two chapters initiate that last week’s description. If this is the case, then the picture of Revelation 4-5 is the next thing we as a church will see when we enter heaven after the rapture. **The church is not in the Tribulation.**

The transition also changes our location. The verse leads us up to heaven using such distinct images as

The open door -

The return of the initial voice –

The invitation to “Come up” –

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984. Zondervan: Grand Rapids

The Throne of God

Revelation 4:2-6 (NIV)

² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

The Precedent

Twice before the throne of God has been seen by prophets.

Isaiah

Isaiah saw the Lord and his throne in Is. 6.

Isaiah 6:1-5 (NIV)

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

The vision is similar in that:

The appearance of God inspires awe (and unworthiness)

God's Holiness is proclaimed by surrounding beings

The vision is different because:

Isaiah is seeing God's throne on earth (the temple). John sees the throne in heaven.

Isaiah details the appearance of God while John details the surroundings.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel saw the Lord and his throne in Ezekiel 1 and again in Ezekiel 10

Ezekiel 1:25-28 (NIV)

²⁵ Then there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. ²⁶ Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. ²⁷ I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. ²⁸ Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

and...

Ezekiel 10:1-5 (NIV)

¹ I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. ² The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And as I watched, he went in. ³ Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. ⁴ Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. ⁵ The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.

The vision is similar in that:
Again, living beings surround the Lord

There is a radiance around the throne described as a "rainbow" and a precious stone (interestingly, emeralds are a form of sapphire.)

The vision is different because:
The throne is again, on earth

Again, Ezekiel focuses on the appearance of the Lord himself describing Him in terms of judgment.

Are the wheels transportation or the markers of the radiance of the throne?

John's vision

The presence of God

In Jasper – a blue stone

In Carnelion – currently called a ruby

In the emerald shimmer or rainbow

The extended scene

24 thrones – Upon the thrones are 24 elders in white (victory) and gold crowns. They might be:

Representatives of the 12 tribes plus the 12 apostles

24 angels who serve as leaders.

Some other group of leaders

The number is significant because the number 12 seems to signify a full group. In the Hebrew mind redundancy equals completion therefore the 24 is a complete and full leadership.

Lightning and Thunder – Most probably the words of the most high and not the actions of His seat. God's voice is often pictured as lightning and thunder.

Seven Lamps – As established in chapter 1 the lamps are the physical representation of the Holy Spirit.

Sea of Glass – Several possibilities exist for this. The one I think most likely comes from the ancient near eastern belief that clear glass made the perfect platform for the judgment seat of the King.

the clarification process used for glass was slow and laborious

The picture was one of openness and transparency

Only the greatest of rulers would invest in such a magnificent pavement.

The Koran tells a story of Solomon's glass pavement and that the Queen of Sheba lifted her skirts to keep them from getting wet in what she thought was water approaching his throne.

Other theories of the crystal sea include:

A fountain like that before Solomon's temple

An ocean which separates God's throne from any who would approach.

The population of the world (saints?) calmed before the presence of God.

The Four Living Creatures –

Distinctly different in description from the cherubim of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the creatures may be representatives of all creation since they mirror the four created beings upheld by the Talmud as the perfection of God's creation – the eagle, the ox, the lion, and man. Their wings mirror the cherubim and their eyes identify them as all seeing. Their message mirrors the words of the cherubim but extends it to include the theme of the book

Revelation 4:8 (NIV)

⁸ *Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."*

God's Holiness – the "Holy, Holy, Holy" states God's perfection of Transcendence.

God's Supremacy – He is the "Almighty"

God's Eternality – past present and future existing simultaneously

Revelation 4:11 (NIV)

¹¹ *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

Their proclamation brings agreement. – whenever the creatures speak the elders bow down and agree. This praise is

Night and Day

Never ending

Constant

Universal

The beginning of Judgment

Revelation 5:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”

Everything about this picture speaks of God’s outpoured punishment for sin.

He is seated on His throne – the place of judgment.

The scroll is in His right hand – the dominant and ruling hand.

The scroll – the document of justice.

Written on both sides – the indictment is full (overfull)

Seven Seals – perfect in its opinion.

Revelation 5:3-7 (NIV)

³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

This judgment is reserved for God alone. – another sign that the judgments to follow are God’s wrath. No man or living creature can bring God’s wrath upon the world because then it would cease to be God’s wrath!

John’s disappointment. – John desires

The completion of God’s work

The vindication of the saints. – remember he is living in the time of the church’s greatest persecution.

The Completer of God’s work

Jesus Christ is the judge and king. He is here portrayed with several OT pictures of his power and authority.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah – The strength of Israel

The Root of David – The Initiator of authority

A Lamb, looking as if it had been slain – The Perfector of salvation

His presence before the throne is in the center of all of God's Holiness and praise.

The Songs of the Lamb

What follows are the praise songs sung to the Lamb. These are classified by John as a "New" song. The Psalms use the term "New song" to identify songs of salvation as in

Psalm 33:3 (NASB95)

³ Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

Psalm 40:3 (NASB95)

³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.

This is the ultimate song of salvation because it begins at the throne of God among the elders and creatures singing:

Revelation 5:9-10 (NASB95)

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

The song proclaims:

Christ's worth

Christ's work – Redemption of men

The result – a kingdom of men

Spreads to the Angels

Revelation 5:12 (NASB95)

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.”

Then culminates with all of creation

Revelation 5:13 (NASB95)

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.”

This last verse, in my opinion is the chorus we, the saved and raptured sing before the throne.