

Lesson Five

Vision of the Throne Room of God (4:1-11)

John's Heavenly Vision (4:1-2a)

4:1. John now receives visions for “what must take place after these things.” John saw a “door standing open to heaven” because he was invited to enter a non-earthly estate. John once more heard a voice like the sound of a trumpet (1:10). This was the voice of Jesus. Jesus revealed the future to John.

4:2a. John received this vision while in the Spirit, just as he had when he received the vision of the glorified Jesus (1:10).

The Indescribable Throne Room of God (4:2b-3, 5- 6a)

4:2b-3. John saw a throne and One seated on the throne. John described the brilliance and glory of the throne and God who sits upon it. He used three stones to illustrate the radiance of God, and lightening to describe the blinding glory of the throne. Around the throne was an emerald rainbow, a symbol of God's promise. Emerald is the color for life.

4:5. Flashes of lightening and peals of thunder are familiar symbols of God's presence and power (Ex.19:16; Ps.18:13-15; Eze.1:13). John saw seven burning lamps; he interpreted them to be the seven Spirits of God (1:4). Seven Spirits represents the full knowledge of God. Only an omniscient God knows all that is to come!

4:6a. The appearance of a “sea of glass” separates God and his throne room from his created order. Our God is so transcendent and holy that separation is necessary.

The 24 Elders and Four Living Creatures (4:4, 6b-8a)

4:4. The identity of the 24 elders is debated. Most likely they represent the 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles. The number 12 represents wholeness. The whole OT and NT saints of God are represented through the 24 elders. They wear white robes, which is a symbol of purity. They wear crowns (stephanos), because they are victors and overcomers. They sit around the throne because they reign with Christ.

4:6b-8. John saw four living creatures around the throne of God. They have multiple eyes, which represents their unlimited intelligence. They each have six wings that represent swift movement (cp Isa.6:1-3; Eze.10:14).

- One creature had the face of a lion, representative of wild beasts.
- One creature had the face of a calf, representative of domestic animals.
- One creature had the face of a man, representative of humans.
- One creature had the face of an eagle, representative of flying creatures.

The four living creatures represent God's creation. These six-winged creatures surround the throne and worship God. The number six represents imperfection. God's creation is imperfect yet it brings praise to the God of creation.

The Worship of God (4:8b-11)

4:8b. The four living creatures sing a hymn of praise to God. They acknowledge His holiness, His power, and His eternity. These are three great attributes of God that render Him worthy of worship!

4:9-11. The 24 elders join the four living creatures in worship. They do so by singing and giving. They sing about God's worthiness due to His work of creation. They humbly give their crowns by casting them at His feet.