

**Revelation 4:1** After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this."

<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!

<sup>3</sup> And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

<sup>4</sup> Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.

<sup>5</sup> From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God;

<sup>6</sup> and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

<sup>7</sup> the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

<sup>8</sup> And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease

1. The locus of the action now changes, the preliminary vision is on Patmos, and now what he is seeing is in heaven. As you might expect, John needs to use more vivid and wilder imagery to convey the sense of infinite awe he is experiencing.

2. The throne is the center of all of John's heavenly vision, simply because God is the clear center of everything heavenly.

3. Gems, apart from their value, have a kind of iridescence—light seems to dance around in them; and if they are cut well, one can almost get lost in the facets. Jasper is green and emerald-like, calling forth images of lush meadows and forests—calm soothing images for those who live in an arid climate, and also reflecting God's creative power. Carnelian is a rusty red, which looks a bit like a glowing coal—warming, but also burning in wrath against sin. The rainbow is a clear image for the early Christians of the story of Noah—God hung his bow in the clouds, and his wrath was no more—an image of mercy, with the overtones of creativity and calmness that green suggests.

4. The 24 elders seem to be a reference to the twelve apostles of the NT, and the twelve patriarchs of the OT. The leaders of the tribes of God's people in both covenants.

5. This calls forth the imagery of Mount Sinai in Exodus, where God appeared with lightning and thunder—this is nothing less than the same divine presence that has guided Israel throughout her whole history.

6. There is a mention in Exodus of God's court in heaven being paved with pure sapphire. This calls forth that image, but also to someone who lived in exile on the sea, there is imagery of deep calm, and also great distance between John and the throne.

7. the four living creatures represent respectively what is noblest, strongest, wisest, and quickest out of all creation. The rest of the imagery is from Ezekiel's vision of the Cherubim and Isaiah's vision of the seraphim. They are full of eyes because they see and perceive all, in every direction. The wings are from Isaiah, and they represent humility, and speed, as well as giving them a distinctly other-worldly flavor.

8. The function of these angelic beings is to be the divine Choirmasters,

<p>to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"  <sup>9</sup> And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever,  <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,  <sup>11</sup> "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."</p>	<p>constantly leading the company of heaven in worship. That is not necessarily to say that this is all they ever do, but more that it is their constant disposition. These four creatures were later come to be associated with the four evangelists, but keep in mind that there weren't yet four gospels when this was written, so that link is fanciful! The "holy, holy, holy" has been interpreted as a Trinitarian reference, but more likely it is simply repeated to emphasize that God is the most holy. This is probably drawn directly from familiar worship.  10. the crowns, which are a gift from God are appropriately given back to him in worship.  11. The title "our Lord and God" had been usurped by Domitian, and is here restored to its rightful owner. Why? Because only by God do we have our being, and we owe nothing to the emperor along those lines. This also probably comes directly from familiar worship. It is still in common use today in many churches.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 5:1</b> And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals;  <sup>2</sup> and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"  <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,  <sup>4</sup> and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.  <sup>5</sup> Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."  <sup>6</sup> And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth;  <sup>7</sup> and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him</p>	<p>1. The scroll is the history of all creation—God's plan, which must be fulfilled. Seven again is the number of perfection and completion, so opening them all means the completion of God's plan and the fulfillment of creation.  2-3. Because of the sinful state of humanity, no one is worthy, or even capable of bringing God's plan about.  4. John weeps because it appears that God's beautiful plan for our salvation cannot come to fruition on account of our sins.  5. He is then corrected by one of the elders, who tells him that God has made provision for the sinfulness of humanity. The Lion was a symbol of the tribe of Judah, and also frequently used in Messianic prophecy because it is the noblest and fiercest of creatures. The messiah is the one who is capable of completing God's work, because he alone is sinless.  6. John looks, expecting to see a lion, and instead there is a Lamb! This is a clear allusion to the surprising nature of Jesus life, the state of his birth, and the manner in which he fulfilled his</p>

who was seated on the throne.

<sup>8</sup> And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints;

<sup>9</sup> and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup> and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth."

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

<sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

<sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!"

<sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

role as Messiah. He was not the military leader that was expected, but conquered through his death. The seven horns and seven eyes simply mean 'all powerful' and 'all knowing', and full of the whole Spirit of God.

8. there is a distinct idea here of the connection between the worship in heaven and the worship on earth. There is an old tradition, probably stemming from this, that every time the Mass was said, a bowl of incense appeared at the foot of God's throne in heaven. There is no such superstition here, but there is a distinct notion that the Church Militant here on Earth is not separate from the Church Triumphant in Heaven, and the thing that binds us together is our worship of God.

The rest of the chapter describes the way praise for God erupts in Heaven because of the actions of the Lamb—the Lion of Judah—the Messiah—Jesus Christ. The hymns no doubt come from the worship of the early Church, and it would have been heartwarming to the persecuted Christians who read this to hear that the things they said when they met together on a Sunday in worship were the same things that were being said in heaven. This also reinforces the idea that worship, literally giving what one is worthy of, is the appropriate reaction for all beings to the wonderful works of God in creation and redemption through Jesus Christ.