

An Awesome Picture of Heaven!

Sunday, May 29 at 8:00 & 10:45

Sixth Sunday of Easter – 2011

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, so far in the book of Revelation we have covered the brief introduction (1:1-3) and the message to the seven churches (1:4-3:22). That message began with *important information about Jesus* (1:4-20); then *specific information to each church* (2:1-3:22). Now, in chapter 4, *we come to an awesome picture of heaven!*

¹ After these things [the writing of the seven letters] I looked, and behold, a door *standing open in heaven [in the sky]*, and the first voice which I had heard [the voice of Jesus (1:10-20)], 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.”

1. John, similar to Paul, saw and heard awesome things – Paul wrote about his experience with these words:
^{NAU} **2 Corinthians 12:2** “I know a man in Christ... [who] was caught up to the third heaven. ⁴ ...into Paradise and heard inexpressible words...”
2. Things which *must* take place – The Greek word translated “must” or “it is necessary” is simply pronounced “day” (δεῖ); *a short but powerful word!* It tells us “**that the future is already determined and that what John would see would surely come to pass....** [Furthermore] **these are not guesses...but revelations**

of the God who sees the future as clearly as he see the present and the past.” (Dr. Becker, 83)

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit [*in a special God-given state in which John could see and hear awesome things*]; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne [*God the Father*]. **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.

3. Verse 3 describes the appearance of God, thus the glory of God – Think about the burning bush (Exodus 3:2) and the pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21); now, *in this section*, the glory of God is being described as *the sparkling of a multifaceted precious stone!*

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.

4. Twenty-four elders – As stated in a previous sermon, *the number 12 and its multiples* represent the church. Now, thinking about 12 tribes (OT) and 12 apostles (NT), *the 24 thrones represent the Old and New Testament Church!*
5. Clothed in white – The elders are righteous in God’s sight *by grace through faith in Jesus!* So are we!
6. Thrones and golden crowns – Though undeserved, they have been given royal authority, *like kings!*

5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder [*like on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16)*]. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God [*thus the Holy Spirit*]; **6** and

before the throne *there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal*;

7. A sea of glass, like crystal – Here on earth, *in our sinful world*, the polluted seas roar and foam; but the opposite is true in heaven, representing “**the perfect peace** [and the sinless perfection] **that exists in the presence of God.**” (Dr. Becker, 85)

and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.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*.

8. The overall picture – God the Father is on the throne in the center, around him are the four living creatures, and around them are the 24 elders.
9. The four creatures are full of eyes – They could be high ranking angels, *it's difficult to say for sure*, but there many eyes point to their “**awareness of what is happening throughout the universe.**” (Dr. Becker, 86)
10. The four creatures are representatives of the major kinds of life (also see Genesis chapter 1) – Here the *eagle* represents *birds*, the *lion* – *wild animals*, the *calf* – *domestic animals*, and the *man* – *people*.

⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings [like the heavenly vision in Isaiah chapter 6], are full of eyes around and within; 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.**”

11. WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME – A reference to *at least* God the Father, *maybe also* the

Son (1:8), *and maybe also* the H.S. – because of the words “Holy, Holy, Holy”!

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.”

12. The 24 elders, the representatives of the OT and NT Church, will cast their crowns before the throne – Why? Even though they are in prominent positions, they know GOD’S ACTION HAS ACCOMPLISHED ALL OF IT; therefore, *they give Him all the glory!*
13. Creation – Think about ALL that exists that is truly good; *God willed it and God created it*; without God none of it would exist; therefore, *He is worthy to receive all glory and honor!*
 - a. Evolution – Today, so many dishonor the Creator by denying His *existence*, His *Word*, and His *Son!*
 - b. The Bible – ^{NIV} **Psalm 19:1** “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

Conclusion: Now, *forgiven in Jesus and forever blessed*, let us honor the Triune God! And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

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